

# BASICS OF EMAIL MARKETING FOR NONPROFITS

Using Email Communications  
to Build and Strengthen  
Constituent Relationships

## THIS GUIDE INCLUDES:

- *Strategies For Reaching Your Intended Recipients*
- *Benchmarks For Measuring Your Email Success*
- *Practical Tips To Maximize Your Email Marketing Solution*

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## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Getting emails delivered, opened and read is tough enough due to spam filtering technology, which sometimes mistakenly blocks legitimate email. When emails do get through spam filters, constituents with overloaded “inboxes” do their own filtering and decide which messages to read or delete, unopened.

You need effective online tools and techniques for connecting with supporters on a timely basis and delivering the right message to prompt action such as donating, running a volunteer fundraising campaign, joining or renewing membership, advocating on pending legislation, or participating in an event.

This guide was created by a team of experts with the experience of working on Internet projects with 1400+ nonprofit organizations throughout the United States and Canada. It’s designed specifically for nonprofit professionals as a handbook about the basics of email marketing. It describes how to build a file of email addresses, get people to sign up to receive email communications, eliminate spam elements from your emails, and execute successful email communications.



**For more detailed best practices about online marketing,** refer to the *Additional Resources* section at the end of this guide, or visit [www.convio.com/our-research](http://www.convio.com/our-research)

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# INTRODUCTION TO EMAIL MARKETING

Using email to start and grow relationships with constituents is critical for a nonprofit. Many successful organizations are using email as a cost-effective way to reach out to large volumes of both new and long-time supporters with regular, timely and inspiring information tailored to each person's interests.

Email marketing can help your organization build a loyal, involved support base and driving higher response rates in fundraising, advocacy, marketing, special events and other functions.

## ► Six Reasons Email is Great for Nonprofits

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- 1. Email is relatively inexpensive.** Traditionally, nonprofits have relied heavily on direct mail and telemarketing for communications and appeals. But, the relatively high cost of these methods makes them impractical for the frequent communications needed to grow relationships with supporters. Supplementing traditional communication methods with cost-effective email allows you to communicate more frequently and maintain an ongoing relationship with supporters.
- 2. Email has immediacy.** Organizations often have an urgent need for donations, or have a small window to raise funds and send out critical information in the wake of a current event. In these cases, there's no time to write, design, print and send a direct mail piece. The immediate nature of email communications allows you to be nimble; you can execute fundraising campaigns and respond to timely issues in a matter of hours.
- 3. Email yields quick results.** With direct mail, there can be a response lag time of several weeks, or even months. Email, however, typically returns 80 percent of total responses within 48 hours of a mailing. This allows you to evaluate the results of your campaign and quickly adjust your strategy as needed.
- 4. Email gives you new insights.** Through email, you can track open and click-through rates on both emails and links within emails, allowing you to quickly and easily analyze the effectiveness of your messages and your campaigns to determine your supporters' interests and to ensure you are giving them the information they want.
- 5. Email allows you to send personalized messages.** Email allows you to easily segment your database and send targeted messages based on individual constituent interests, donation history, or any other field in your database.
- 6. Email allows you to segment and test offers.** Email allows you to test different messages on different segments of your list quickly and inexpensively, so you can fine-tune your message based on real results before you send to your entire list.

This guide focuses on how to get started with email as the cornerstone of your online marketing plan. With topics ranging from building a file of email addresses to measuring and analyzing email results, it will help you to execute successful email campaigns that get results for your organization.

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# GETTING STARTED

## Building an Email Address File

The first step in any effective online marketing strategy is to build and maintain your email file. The number of email addresses you have on file has a direct impact on your organization's ability to communicate, cultivate, and drive actions from supporters.

The idea of building a usable email file may seem daunting, but you can grow your email file using the following proven tactics:

### **Gather Email Addresses Offline**

Every time you communicate with existing or prospective supporters, you have the opportunity to collect email addresses. Planned interactions such as renewal appeals, membership drives, and event invitations are perfect opportunities to ask for email addresses. Simply add an email address field to all response forms. At events where you will interact with a large number of constituents, set out a newsletter sign-up sheet or offer a giveaway for attendees who drop in a card with their name and email address.

### ► Best Practice

When collecting email addresses, be sure to let people know how they will be used. Always give people a chance to opt out of receiving email by providing a check box that says something like, "I'd like to receive future mailings".

Remember, when asking constituents for email addresses offline, you should emphasize the benefits they will receive by providing this information. Remind supporters that by communicating with them online, your organization can save money and time, allowing you to more effectively serve your mission. Also emphasize the benefit of timely communication: With email communications, you are better equipped to respond to compelling events and inform them quickly of important news, developments, events and programs.

### **Gather Email Addresses Online**

Your website is the best source for collecting email addresses. Visitors to your website have sought you out because they are interested in your organization. This existing affinity is a powerful incentive for your online visitors to provide you with the information you need to build longer-lasting relationships with them online. Here are three tips for gathering email addresses from your website:

- **Provide quick online registration.** Use a web-based registration form that allows site visitors to register easily and quickly. Remember that the more information you request, the less likely people will be to complete the entire form. So, think carefully about the information you want to capture, and minimize the number of required fields — name and email address should suffice. You can always ask for more information about the individual through follow-up communications.
- **Give site registration prominent placement.** Dedicate a consistent area of your home page to promoting online registration. Place it in an eye-catching spot above the fold to reflect its importance. You might also use an image or graphic to draw attention to it. Don't forget to promote registration

throughout the rest of your website — consider including a registration link in your page wrapper so the message will be included on every page of your site.

- **Promote the benefits of online registration.** Make registration compelling for your site visitors. Create special benefits for registered members, and link to a separate page explaining the perks, such as free email newsletters, or advance notification of upcoming events.

### **Drive Traffic To Your Website**

Maximize traffic to your website by including your URL in offline communications (e.g., ads, brochures, business cards, direct mail, phone hold recordings, or voice messages). Online channels and communications, such as Facebook™ and email newsletters, should link back to your site for more information. The idea is to tell prospects and supporters about the resources available to them on your website and keep the website content current and informative so that visitors will return.

You can also use the free Google Grants program for search engine marketing (SEM). With SEM, you “purchase” keywords to promote visibility. Keep in mind that searchers are pre-qualified prospects; you need to compel them to visit your website by crafting offers that are designed to drive traffic and registrations.

### **Build Your List Through Viral Marketing**

“Forward to a friend” email campaigns, also known as viral marketing, can help you reach new supporters and grow your email file efficiently. In a viral campaign, your organization sends an email with a call-to-action (such as a solicitation for donations, event invitation or action alert) to your existing email file, or to selected groups of constituents in the file. The email also asks recipients to forward the message to friends, relatives and co-workers so they, too, can get involved.

When a new supporter from this previously untapped network of friends clicks through to your website to register and take action, you can ask for their permission to include them in future communications. Imagine the effect of one person sending 10 emails, and then each friend forwarding another 10, and so on. If this happened five times, a single email would reach 100,000 people.

Email greeting cards, or “ecards,” are another way to build your email address list through viral marketing. With ecards, your constituents can create their own emails — using your email greeting card template with your organization’s branding — to send to their networks of friends and family.

## ► Acquiring Emails: Questions to Ask Yourself

- *Is email acquisition a priority for our organization?*
- *Compared with the number of contact records we have, how many email addresses do we have? How could we get more?*
- *How many different ways do we have to capture email addresses?*
- *Have we really thought about “What’s in it for me if I give you my email address?” from the constituent’s viewpoint?*
- *What content or programs do we have that could be modified to help capture email addresses?*

# SPOTLIGHT ON BUILDING A DIALOG

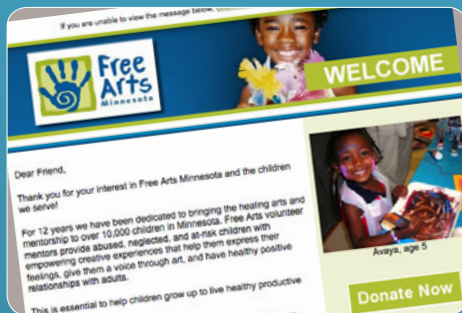
You've undoubtedly heard that communication is the key to successful relationships. Nowhere is this truer than in the world of online fundraising. In addition to maintaining the relationship, regular email communications can also play an important part in growing your email list. Sending good content regularly creates opportunities for your constituents to share it with others, which in turn will drive further awareness of your organization, website visits and new constituents. Here are four effective approaches to build a dialog using email.



**eNewsletters** can be monthly, bi-monthly, or even quarterly depending on your organizational resources and available content. The key here is not just to be regular, but to offer high-quality, engaging content. The eNewsletter consists of story excerpts that direct readers to the website for the full story.



An **eBlast** is similar in format to the eNewsletter, but contains only a single topic or story excerpt.



An **eLetter** is a personal letter from the voice of the organization. It is similar to an eBlast, but is written in the first person, normally by the Executive Director, and usually includes a picture of this person and their digital signature.



An **eCard** has a single focus like an eBlast, but with an emphasis on visual design. eCards usually include simple, timely topics like a save the date, an announcement that your annual report is available online, or a Mother's Day card.

### **Use List Rentals Or An Email Appending Service (With Caution)**

To increase your email list, you can have a third-party list owner cross-promote your organization. They should do so by sending an email with their brand and a link to your website for interested parties to opt in to your email list.

If you have an extensive donor or supporter database, but few current email addresses, consider taking advantage of the growing number of email append services that will take a postal mail address and attempt to find a matching email address. These services will typically provide (for a fee) all email addresses from their database that don't bounce. A cautionary note: This process does not obtain permission for you to add the email addresses to your list. Even if supporters have a relatively strong offline relationship with your organization, they won't necessarily be happy to receive email from you. The safe way to use an append service is by having the service send an email driving people to your website, and obtaining an explicit opt-in from site visitors. This results in a smaller list, but one of higher quality.

### **Building Constituent Profiles**

Data about your supporters is worth its weight in gold. It can help you better understand your constituents and how they like to interact with your organization. Data can be used to recognize trends, compare campaigns, and identify what is (or isn't) working. Armed with this information, you can create effective, customized, targeted email communications that demonstrate an understanding of the relationship your supporter has had — and wants to have — with your organization.

Remember also that your supporters' expectations are high. They expect a personalized experience every time they interact with your organization. They want to feel special among your larger group of supporters.

To deliver truly personalized communications, you need to supplement the basic data (name, email address) you have collected from your constituents with more detailed demographic information, and information about their attitudes, interests and behaviors. Using this advanced profile information, you can create and send messages that target specific groups within your database. This personalized touch can dramatically increase response rates as well as strengthen your supporters' commitment to your organization.

#### **Follow these guidelines to help gather profile information:**

- **Use online surveys.** A simple online survey can allow you to gather almost any type of information simply by asking constituents to respond. By using an online survey tool, you can automatically add what you learn about them to their profile in your database.
- **Capture data based on online behavior.** You can gain valuable insight into your supporter's interests simply by capturing data as they click through your website. By embedding trackable links in content on your website, you can flag a registered visitor's profile with information about their particular interests. If supporters respond to an email invitation for a volunteer fundraising event, for example, you can automatically capture this data and use it to send them future event information, or perhaps a volunteer newsletter.

- **Integrate offline and online data into a single view.** If yours is like most nonprofit organizations, you probably already have a significant amount of information about your supporters stored in one (or more) offline databases — and spreadsheets, and scraps of paper. Look into CRM solutions that are built specifically for nonprofits to help you consolidate this information. Convio's Common Ground CRM system, for example, is a complete fundraising and donor management solution that helps you track the details of every relationship in a single database — from prospects, donors, and staff members to volunteers, event participants, and board members.



**For more information about integrating your offline and online data** into a single view, refer to *Toolbox for the Modern Nonprofit: Donor Management Made Easy* (see *Additional Resources* at the end of this guide).



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## MAKING SURE YOUR EMAIL GETS THROUGH

Getting emails delivered, opened and read is tough enough due to spam filtering technology, which sometimes mistakenly blocks legitimate email. When emails do get through spam filters, constituents with overloaded “inboxes” do their own filtering and decide which messages to read or delete, unopened. What’s a nonprofit to do?

The ugly truth is that there is no way to ensure that 100% of your emails will get through to their intended recipient. But, there are ways to maximize your email delivery. Following are a few things that affect email delivery and the things you can do to avoid common delivery problems.

### **Recipient Complaints**

If recipients report your email as spam to their Internet Service Provider (ISP) or email software provider, your organization’s communications may be rejected or diverted to the spam folder. Here are a few tips for keeping your organization’s complaint rates low:

- **Acquire explicit opt-in from all individuals you add to your email list.** Avoid list building methods that assume a supporter wants to be added to your list because they donated to your organization, participated in an event, or have some offline relationship with your organization. Supporters expect to be asked for their consent before you send them email.
- **Study where your complaints are coming from** to identify and avoid problematic list building practices.
- **Stay “white listed”.** Since nonprofits typically email to “home” rather than “work” addresses, half of a group’s typical email file consists of addresses at major ISPs, or consumer providers, such as AOL™, Yahoo!™ and Hotmail™. Check with your email software provider to ensure it has white list relationships, or exemptions from volume filters, with these major providers so your email does not get blocked.

### **List Hygiene**

Keeping your list “clean” is critical to deliverability. If you repeatedly send email to invalid addresses that a recipient’s system has hard bounced, delivery barriers will be raised. Some tips:

- **Review email addresses that are collected offline** and correct common mistakes, such as misspelling of domain names, prior to import.
- **Examine your hard bounces on a quarterly basis**, and consider using an email change of address service to recover working addresses for unreachable supporters. The delivery status of an email address should not be reset without evidence that a hard bounce was in error or spam-policy related.

### **► A Word of Caution**

Bounced email consumes resources, so Internet Service Providers do not appreciate repeated emails to addresses already identified as bad. They use high bounce rates as an indicator of spam, or unsolicited email.

### Supporter Options

Be sure to let supporters choose the types of email communications they want to receive.

Follow these best practices:

- **Provide tools that enable self-serve** subscription management.
- **Allow users to maintain profiles** with their contact data and interest preferences.
- **Make it easier for subscribers to remove themselves** from your email list than make spam complaints.
- **Ensure your “remove me” procedures** across all touch points are operational.

### When It Comes To Content, Use Common Sense

While it is rare that typical nonprofit content will trigger spam filters, it can occur even when you are sending to a fully qualified, fully opted-in list of highly engaged constituents. Avoid content practices that can impact delivery by following the following best practices:

- **Use a light, lean style** with significant chunks of meaningful content (spam filters look for a high ratio of HTML tagging to actual text). Avoid single image email.
- **Design your email to render well** even with images suppressed.
- **Provide a link to the online version** of your HTML newsletter.
- For quality control, **test your content** thoroughly before you send it.



The federal CAN-SPAM Act aims to wipe out illegitimate email practices that threaten the growth and success of the Internet marketplace. While this act relates primarily to commercial, not nonprofit, activities, you should familiarize yourself with it. **For more information about this act**, visit the Federal Trade Commission site at: <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/business/ecommerce/bus61.shtm>

### ► Quick Tip

Your email marketing software should offer a spam checker so you can check your email communications for any potential spam violations and correct them before sending your email. This capability helps ensure that more of your recipients receive your communications.

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# PLANNING EFFECTIVE EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

Any successful direct marketer will tell you that strategic planning is a critical element in the success or failure of a direct mail campaign. The same is true for an email marketing campaign.

You may simply be sending one email message. Or, your campaign may have multiple email messages, with each response triggering a series of subsequent email messages. You might want to include or exclude recipients who responded a certain way from future email messages. A strategic plan will help you organize all of these considerations for a more effective campaign.

## Determining Campaign Objectives

As with any marketing campaign, you must understand your objectives before you send an individual email or launch an email campaign. Setting objectives for the email message or email campaign will help you sharpen each message and determine the best approach — from email newsletters and urgent news updates to email fundraising appeals — for your communications. It also will help you to effectively evaluate results and understand your return on investment.

For instance, your goal may be to establish a campaign for ongoing communication with your existing supporters to keep them updated and connected with the organization, and therefore strengthen their loyalty. This campaign might include a monthly email newsletter that lets your constituents know how their support is helping the organization to further its mission.

## Establishing a Communication Schedule

As you prepare to execute an email campaign, it's important to consider the frequency with which you will be contacting your constituents. Too-frequent (and too-infrequent) communications can result in deteriorating relationships with supporters.

The best approach is to set a schedule that you think makes sense, try it, listen to feedback, and adjust accordingly. Your supporters will let you know by their response if you are contacting them too little or too often. **Consider these pointers as you develop your communication schedule:**

- **Synchronize online with offline direct marketing programs.** Remember that email communication should complement offline communication programs. Time email campaigns to coincide with direct mail delivery. Offer constituents the option to not receive direct mail, if they would rather correspond only by email.
- **Coordinate within your organization.** Remember that other individuals and departments within your organization may be planning to use your email address file. It is important to coordinate usage

### ► Did You Know?

In addition to helping you create and send individual emails, your email marketing software should allow you to set up email campaigns. This will allow you to configure multiple emails and audiences in a single campaign, and track all responses within the context of the campaign, versus having to track results for each separate email, and then aggregate those results.

so that your organization does not flood its supporters' inboxes with multiple email messages.

- **Pay attention to the day and time of scheduled delivery.** Most marketers avoid weekends, Mondays and Fridays for delivering email communications. On these days, supporters may be most distracted, and your email could get lost in their email backlogs. Mid-week, early- or mid-morning, and mid-afternoon are generally good times to test in an attempt to drive higher response rates. Don't be afraid to test a variety of schedules, and be sure to carefully track response rates.
- **Let relevancy drive frequency.** The type and relevancy of information you will communicate can help determine your email schedule. For general organizational updates and news, monthly or bi-weekly communications might be most effective. Information that frequently changes (such as volunteer schedules), or that is more urgent, may require that you communicate more often.

## ► Suggestion

The most effective way to ensure you don't overwhelm supporters with too-frequent emails is to ask about their preferences. Consider posing this question on your website registration form, or sending an online survey.

### Segmenting Your List to Target Specific Audiences

If you have built constituent profiles as a part of your email file, you will be prepared to better target your audience. As with direct mail, you'll improve response rates by segmenting your email file based on factors such as constituent interests, donation history, gender, age, length of membership or any other defining characteristic, and targeting them with specific messages.

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# CRAFTING AN EMAIL THAT GETS OPENED

Strategic planning and list-building is just the foundation of an effective email marketing campaign. Once these pieces are in place, the following guidelines can help you create a message that will motivate your supporters.

## Optimize The Message Envelope

Pay close attention to the information you include in the email's message envelope, as it can be critical to your response rate.

The purpose of your message's subject line is to get the message opened. Your subject line should be no more than 50 to 60 characters in length, and should tell the recipient something about your message. Use short, action-oriented words to draw on emotion.

Most people scan their emails to see who messages are from and then prioritize which messages to open. If an email appears to come from an unfamiliar source, your open rates may suffer. Capitalize on the strong affinity supporters have for your nonprofit by putting the organization's name in the "from" line.

## Design Your Email To Drive Response

Your message's design and layout can significantly impact response rates:

- **Send graphically rich emails.** Using HTML in your email messages allows you to include photos and images as well as control design elements such as fonts and colors. HTML email is visually pleasing, professional looking, and generally easier to read. Plus, it allows you to reinforce your organization's brand by including your logo or other recognizable visual elements in each message.

However, it's important to remember that some of your supporters may not be able to read HTML messages because of the limits of their particular email provider. Choose email marketing software that supports multi-part email distribution of both HTML and text format messages, which will automatically detect when someone cannot accept a graphical email, or has indicated that he or she prefers to receive text-only messages, and will deliver a text version in its place.

- **Keep key message points above the fold.** Most email programs allow users to preview messages without fully opening them. Although your readers may be able to pre-set the size of their viewing window, you can assume that only the top 25 percent of the email will be visible. Make sure you include the most compelling elements of your message and any calls-to-action in this top portion of the email.
- **Keep your message short.** Don't overwhelm your message recipients with too much copy. Limit the message to one or two key points and keep your overall message to less than two screen lengths to reduce the amount of scrolling required by readers.
- **Drive readers to your website.** One way to keep email messages short is to replace lengthy explanatory text in your message with a short "teaser" followed by a link to your website. This

### ► Did You Know?

Spam filters watch for excessive punctuation and capitalization in email subject lines. To avoid having your message blocked by spam filters, use concise subject lines.



The highlighted area represents the top 25% of your message that viewers can see within a preview pane. Include the most compelling elements of your message in this top portion of your email.

tactic has the added benefit of allowing you to track the links that are most frequently clicked, which will help you evaluate supporters' interests and the impact of your message. But instead of simply dumping them onto your homepage, send readers directly to a page where they can take action, such as signing up as an advocate, making a donation or registering for an event.

### Personalizing Your Message

The power of email marketing lies in the ability to create and develop relationships with your supporters by delivering content that is specific to their interests, motivations, geographic location and other characteristics.

Addressing supporters by name is a simple way to add a personal touch to your email communications, and alone can make a significant impact on response rates. A good email marketing tool makes it easy to insert merge fields into your messages. These merge fields pull any data from your database, allowing you to automatically send a unique version of the email to each constituent.

While selectively displaying personal information is important, the real power of personalization

### ► Did You Know?

Your email marketing software should allow you to easily add content to a single organizational email or email newsletter, delivering local content just to constituents in that area. This can be done by state, ZIP code, affiliate and/or region.

lies in automatically customizing the content a constituent receives in an email message. As with the personalization merge fields that allow you to address each constituent by name, this technique draws from the registration and profile information you have gathered in your database. But in this case, the “conditional content” might be a single sentence, a full paragraph, images, a survey or even unique donation forms. This content is automatically inserted into an email if a constituent meets particular criteria that you have designated. By adding content based on each constituent’s interests, your organization will make its communications more relevant, and more valuable.

 Furry Friends Animal Rescue

## Sponsor a Cat in Our Shelter Today!



**Chloe** (Female, 3-1/2 years old)  
Chloe is a sweet kitty who just wants love. [Read more >](#) [SPONSOR ME](#)



**Herman** (Male, 2 years old)  
Herman wants to be the man of your house. [READ MORE](#)



**Herman** (Male, 2 years old)

 Furry Friends Animal Rescue

## Sponsor a Dog in Our Shelter Today!



**Frank** (Male, 6 months old)  
Frank is a happy, slobbery little man. [Read more >](#) [SPONSOR ME](#)



**Ginger** (Female, 5 years old)  
Ginger just wants to snuggle with you. [READ MORE](#)



**Ginger** (Female, 5 years old)

*The best email marketing tools allow you to add personalized, customized content to your emails to match a constituent’s interests, based on criteria that have designated.*

## Testing Your Message

Prior to sending your email out to hundreds or thousands of supporters, be sure to thoroughly test your communication internally. This important process prevents distribution of emails containing costly and/or potentially embarrassing mistakes.

Designate and train a few people within your department or organization, and send test messages to this same group to maintain consistent quality standards. These internal testers should complete the following tests:

- **Check for display variations.** Set up test email accounts on a variety of email clients (i.e. Microsoft Outlook™, AOL, Hotmail, and Yahoo!). Have your testers evaluate the look of the email in various email clients so you have an understanding of what your constituents will see.
- **Check functionality.** Your testers should check that the various technical components of your campaign work properly. Testers should attempt to mimic the experience your constituents will have when they receive your email. Be sure to click through all links in the email and on any landing pages. Also test the transaction, registration, or other functionality associated with your call-to-action.
- **Test externally** to fine-tune the message and check the process. Take advantage of the inherent benefits of the Internet by sending test messages to a sub-set of recipients prior to sending it to your entire email file.
- **Check for message effectiveness.** Because the Internet allows you to send messages and receive responses quickly, you can compare response rates of different messages and subject lines, and then refine your email message before sending it to the entire constituent base — ensuring the maximum response for each email campaign.
- **Check your campaign process.** In addition to testing the effectiveness of the email itself, it is important to send a test message to ensure you are prepared to handle responses — particularly if you are sending a message to several thousand constituents or more. Is your telemarketing team staffed appropriately to handle the volume of responses? Is your marketing staff prepared to reply to the email messages that come back from your constituents? Sending a test message to a small percentage of your target audience will help you to identify any holes in your process before sending to the entire list.

### ► A/B Test Groups

Your email marketing software should allow you to send two or more different messages to a percentage of your target audience to test the effectiveness of each message (often called A/B split testing), and then send the most effective message to the remainder of the audience without sending to the test group again.



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## TRACKING AND MEASURING RESULTS

The relative success of an email marketing campaign or single email communication can be judged on a variety of criteria, depending on your goals and objectives. As you learn more about your constituents' online preferences, polish your message, and develop benchmarks for successful email marketing campaigns, you'll be able to fine-tune your strategy.

### ► Helpful Benchmarks to Evaluate your Results

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**Open rate.** This is the percentage of recipients who open (view) your message divided by the number of messages delivered. Though not indicative the number of people who actually read your message, this measure can give you a good idea of your subject line effectiveness and helps you to track trends. A good open rate for nonprofit email appeals is around 20 percent, while a good open rate for an email newsletter is slightly higher — around 22 percent.

**Click-through rate (CTR).** Calculates the percentage of recipients who click on links within the body of your email. CTR indicates the effectiveness of the text and graphics in your email message, as well as the level of interest in your campaign or organization. Your email marketing tool should allow you to determine the individual CTR for each link as well as an aggregate CTR for the message as a whole. A good click-through rate for email appeals is 2 to 3 percent, while a good CTR for email newsletters is 3.5 to 4 percent.

**Response rate.** Response rate measures the percentage of recipients who take some type of action—such as completing a survey, signing a petition or making a donation—after clicking through to your website. The response rate can be influenced by many factors, including the mix of prospects and active donors in the recipient list, the degree to which the list is composed of organically acquired versus appended emails, and the effectiveness of the email appeal and landing page/donation form. A good response rate for an email appeal is around .15 to .16 percent.

**Opt-out (or unsubscribe) rate.** If subscribers do not continue to find content compelling, they may choose to unsubscribe, or “opt out” of receiving future email communications from your organization. Your email marketing tool should allow you to include an unsubscribe link at the bottom of your message, and automatically process opt-outs. Increases in your unsubscribe rate can be an indicator of over-frequent or inappropriate communications. Your opt-out rate should be at 0.1 to 0.2 percent.

**Forward rate.** Another measure of success is the frequency with which supporters forward messages to their family and friends, and whether those additional recipients click through.



**For more information about metrics** for email list growth and email appeals refer to the *Convio Online Marketing Nonprofit Benchmark Index Study* (see *Additional Resources* at the end of this guide).

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## HOW CONVIO CAN HELP YOU

Convio provides software and services that help nonprofits more effectively attract, engage and cultivate supporters. As a web-based platform, Convio is a cost effective solution that will grow with your organization and can integrate with other systems to extend your online reach.

### Web-Based Software Suite

- Fundraising
- Donor Database & Management
- Events
- Peer-toPeer Fundraising & Events
- eCommerce
- Web Content Management
- Advocacy
- Email Marketing

### Strategic and Technical Services

- Strategy Consulting
- Campaign Management
- User Experience & Research
- Analytics
- Website Design Services
- Technical Design & Integration
- Custom Development
- Training & Support

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## WHY CONVIO IS DIFFERENT

### Passion

Our team is passionate about helping nonprofits further their missions and achieve real results. Over 75% of our client services staff has worked in the nonprofit sector. Meet our team and see examples of our work with clients at [www.convio.com/portfolio](http://www.convio.com/portfolio).

### Trusted Strategic Advisor

Convio is the preferred technology and services partner for over 1,300 nonprofits of all sizes—including over half of the top 50 charities—helping them to achieve tangible results through:

- Database Management & Segmentation
- List Building & Donor Acquisition
- Advocacy & Outreach
- Fundraising
- Event Participation & Fundraising
- Website Engagement & Conversion
- Online & Multi-Channel Strategies
- Training & Support

### Track Record of Innovation & Results

We're a pioneer for online and integrated marketing for nonprofits. Here are just a few examples:

- **Industry Benchmarks**—launched the industry's first benchmark study which we publish annually
- **User Engagement Pathways**—created the concept of defining clear communications paths via email and website to increase engagement and conversions and build this into our product
- **Accessibility**—partnered with Easter Seals to develop a first-time program to offer accessible technology, job training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities
- **Convio Go!**<sup>™</sup>—launched the industry's first affordable, guided fundraising program resulting in a return of \$3 for every \$1 spent
- **Driving Results**—In 2009, Convio helped nonprofits process: \$921 million in online donations, 51.5 million advocacy calls to action, and 3.8 billion emails (95% delivery rate)

BASICS OF EMAIL MARKETING FOR NONPROFITS:

Using Email Communications to Build and Strengthen Constituent Relationships

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Toolbox for the Modern Nonprofit: Donor Management Made Easy** is available at <http://convio.com/donormgmtguide>
- **For more information about the federal CAN-SPAM act**, visit the Federal Trade Commission site at: <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/business/e-commerce/bus61.shtm>
- **The Next Generation of American Giving** is available at <http://convio.com/nextgeneration>
- **The Convio Online Marketing Nonprofit Benchmark Index™ Study** is available at <http://convio.com/benchmark>

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## ABOUT CONVIO

Convio is the leading provider of on-demand constituent relationship management (CRM) software and services that give nonprofit organizations a better way to inspire and mobilize people to support their organization. Convio Online Marketing, the company's online marketing suite, offers integrated software for fundraising, advocacy, events, email marketing and web content management, and its Convio Common Ground™ CRM system helps organizations efficiently track and manage all interactions with supporters. All Convio products are delivered through the Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model and are backed by a portfolio of best-in-class consulting and support services and a network of partners who provide value added services and applications focused on the unique needs of nonprofit organizations. For more information, please visit [www.convio.com](http://www.convio.com).

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