EMAIL MARKETING AND NEWSLETTER
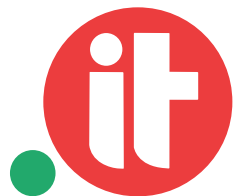
Advice on the strategic use of email

ⓘ TIPS&TRICKS BY ALESSANDRA FARABEGOLI

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Introduction

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Who is Alessandra Farabegoli and what is she talking to us about?

I have been dealing with the Web since the late '90s. After having gone through all areas of digital communication, in recent years I have studied more in-depth the world of email marketing, which I think is a fantastic way to connect to people, distribute information and sell. It might seem strange, but I come from a sector that has nothing to do with communication and marketing. I am a biologist, and so I have an external view. This enables me to look at things not with the eyes of a technician, but as the person who will later have to use them and this has always been of great help to me.

Email marketing and domain

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Email marketing is the strategic use of email to distribute information, consolidate or establish contacts with customers or stakeholders and increase conversions. In a word, sell, whatever the meaning we give to the term "sell".

Email marketing declines in:

· **Newsletter**: message cycles that we send to our contact list

· **DEM**: real advertising messages that we send to someone who is not on our list, trying to gain their attention

· **Transactional or automatic messages**: even if they are often neglected, they are important messages that obtain a good deal of attention on the part of the interlocutors.

How and why can an email marketing campaign help your domain grow?

A well-built and managed mailing list is a precious asset. Who comes across us on social networks is someone that has an occasional relationship with us, while people who voluntarily sign up for our mailing list want to establish a regular relationship with us. It is a bit like getting engaged, rather than just meeting at the bar every now and then.

When someone subscribes to our mailing list, it is because we have promised to send them interesting, useful or advantageous information. It is a promise we must keep, so as not to let them down.

Email marketing is suitable for all activities: it does not just help sell products!

Email marketing is not just for selling but it is useful for anyone who makes their authoritative position an important element of their business, as well as for those who need to communicate often, such as trade associations or non-profit organizations.

Email marketing is a great help even in cases where the purchase cycle is slower, and between the first meeting and the purchasing decision, it is necessary to be known and understood. Finally, it is useful in all cases in which it is necessary to establish, and above all, maintain contacts.

The content
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Editorial plan and time frame

We must communicate often enough not to be forgotten, but not so often as to become too repetitive and tiresome. An acceptable frequency, in principle, can be between once a week and once a month.

There are companies or projects that base their email marketing strategy on daily newsletters. This can be done, but it is important to know that it is a very demanding plan and that over time it becomes increasingly so, because we all receive lots of information and we are continually solicited by the content.

The more often we want to write, the more we have to be attractive and capable.

However, if we cannot write at least once a month, we must be aware that we are not making a newsletter, but we are simply contacting our members in a sporadic way.

Which tone of voice?

Regardless of what we do, we all have to make the language we write smooth and understandable, which does not necessarily mean colloquial, but certainly abandoning the set phrases of the press release.

Our style of writing should be adapted to the type of relationship we want to establish with our clients We must have a recognizable voice, a style which is "ours", to be recognizable and coherent, and then decline the tone according to the circumstances.

In any case, before sending a newsletter, I always recommend reading it aloud. Only in this way can we realize if we would speak in the same way with our addressee in front of us. We must recognize ourselves first in that voice, if we want others to recognize us!

Call to action: how to be direct without being intrusive

We must always try to model the calls to action so that they express an advantage for those who read them, rather than being a request.

We must not ask, we must offer: not "subscribe to the mailing list", but "receive discounts and updates".

A call to action is a promise: it must be clear, attractive and above all true, that is, it must lead to a landing page that really keeps the promise!

Strategy for a successful campaign: which tools?

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Create the right lists for an email marketing campaign

The first step is to create an editorial plan with two things in mind: the kind of people to whom we'd like to write and why they should want to subscribe and read.

Once focused on people and their reason why, we can encourage them with a "Welcome Kit", such as an e-book, a kit of quality content free of charge, or at least some kind of economic advantage, for example a discount or a gift.

We must keep in mind, however, that gambling only on the welcome kit involves the risk that many people sign up just for this and then do not read. The real perceived advantage must be the newsletter, from the second one onwards!

Let's not forget the lists we already have, for example with who is already our customer, to whom we can send messages related to products and services that they have already purchased and regarding similar and associated products and services.

Pay attention to privacy!

Privacy is a tough but just law. If we do not respect it, we risk heavy penalties, and this stimulates us to work correctly and keeps us away from the temptation of annoying people who are not the least bit interested in receiving our messages.

To respect privacy we must write to people who have given us an explicit and documentable consent. We must therefore prepare an easily understandable information sheet, not written in "legalese", and ensure that people give us conscious consent. In this way, whoever subscribes knows what they are facing and expects to receive our messages, so the probability that they react favorably to us is infinitely higher than when we write to complete strangers.

From the technical point of view, the best mechanism to document consent, even in the opinion of the Guarantor, is that of the double opt-in. This means those who register on the site do not immediately enter the mailing list, but receive an email in which they must confirm the registration.

How to invite your users to subscribe to the newsletter?

With a clear, quick form to fill out and promising an advantage to those who sign up.

The longer and more complex the registration form, the fewer people complete it and register. If we want to ask for more information, to help us to segment the list, we must do so by making the data collection as easy as possible, or by asking for the e-mail address at the beginning and postponing the collection of other data, for example topics of personal interest.

A perfect registration form is that of some clothing e-commerce traders, which ask for the email address and make you choose whether to confirm by clicking on a different button depending on gender. This is perfect self-segmentation, in order to receive only offers suitable for your wardrobe.

Five errors to avoid when replying to the reviews:

1. **Working with an editorial plan**: it is essential to define the frequency of the newsletter and arrange its structure as if it were a television channel schedule or the list of columns of a magazine, identifying themes and materials so that they can be organized in time and have them ready when we have to mail it.

2. **Usare uno strumento professionale per l'invio**: a newsletter is not sending a message in ccn to more people.

3. **Learning to write well**: even if the main content of our newsletters is visual, the email lives on text, if only because of the importance that the object has in influencing the opening rates.

4. **Learn to choose or produce the right images**: the quality of our images speaks of us, our iconographic choices must be consistent with our tone of voice, and if we move away from the standard choices of archival photos this can only help us to distinguish ourselves and make us be recognized.

5. **Understand** that even if our mailing list is small and compact at the beginning, sooner or later it will grow, and to manage it well we will have to start segmenting it and stop writing the same things to everyone.

Feedback: how to assess if a campaign is really effective?

There are some indicators specific to email marketing:

· **opening rate**: this shows us how many people have opened the newsletter, at least starting to read it, that is how high our reputation as senders is, and how much the object works;

· **click-through rate**: this tells us how good and convincing we were at prompting people to "do" something, that is, to respond to our call to action.

Then there is an even more important indicator, the conversion rate, which measures the overall success of our campaigns. To be able to measure it, we need to set up the analytics on the site and be able to track the visits that arrive via the newsletter.

Means and instruments

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A good newsletter platform is essential, but it is not enough. Opening an account on Mailup or MailChimp, or on any other mailer, does not guarantee that our newsletters will be successful.

The mailer does a lot of things for us:

· it manages the mailing list efficiently

· it sends mails in large numbers via server

· it checks that there are no spam messages and that the addresses are all real and valid

· it enables you to insert forms on the site that people can fill in to register

· it inserts links in the newsletter to allow you to unsubscribe from the service or to change your registration preferences

· it enables us to segment the mailing list based not only on the declared preferences, but also the actual behaviors

· it helps us to build newsletters that work better thanks to responsive templates, fundamental when the mail is read on mobile devices

- it organizes our work better with scheduling functions

- it allows you to create automatic messages

- it creates tests to improve messages over time;

- it allows us to read the feedback, providing the data to understand what works best.

In the past, it was common for web agencies to develop their own in-house solutions. Today this no longer makes sense, and my advice is certainly to choose one of the many tools that have resisted natural selection and have consolidated their market.

I have been using MailChimp for years, but there are excellent platforms also developed in Italy, such as MailUp, Contact Lab and Diennea MagNews.

There is no one platform better than the others. The choice is made by evaluating its usability, pricing plan and specific features, always keeping in mind what our objectives are and what might be the medium-term developments of our project.