

The Ultimate Guide to Email Marketing

The importance of email marketing

Whether you've been marketing your business for years, or you're just starting out, email marketing is essential to engaging with the individuals who matter most: your customers.

According to [one study](#), 60% of consumers said marketing/advertising emails influenced their purchase decisions. Which means your email marketing strategy is an important tool to connect with prospects, win back lost customers, improve retention, and increase your revenue.

Looking to develop—or revamp—your email marketing program? This guide breaks down everything you need to know before hitting send.

Developing your email marketing program

For most businesses, there are three types of campaigns that make up a successful email marketing strategy. Each category has its own unique and important purpose:

Direct emails are sent from a staff member and can be an integral part of your [sales process](#). By reaching out directly, these emails create a more personal experience for customers.

Newsletters and one-off campaigns offer a chance to promote upcoming events, new products and services as well as any other information your customers will find valuable.

Automated campaigns enable businesses to work smarter, not harder. These preset campaigns are sent automatically to customers at the various stages of their customer journey.

All three campaign types make up a well-rounded email marketing strategy. For example, a business might send a combination of emails, including:

- An automated campaign to immediately welcome clients after they book their first appointment, with a follow-up triggered a week later offering a discount on their next service
- A direct email to make sure the customer loved their experience and to answer any questions they have
- A monthly newsletter to share upcoming events and exciting new offerings

More about direct emails

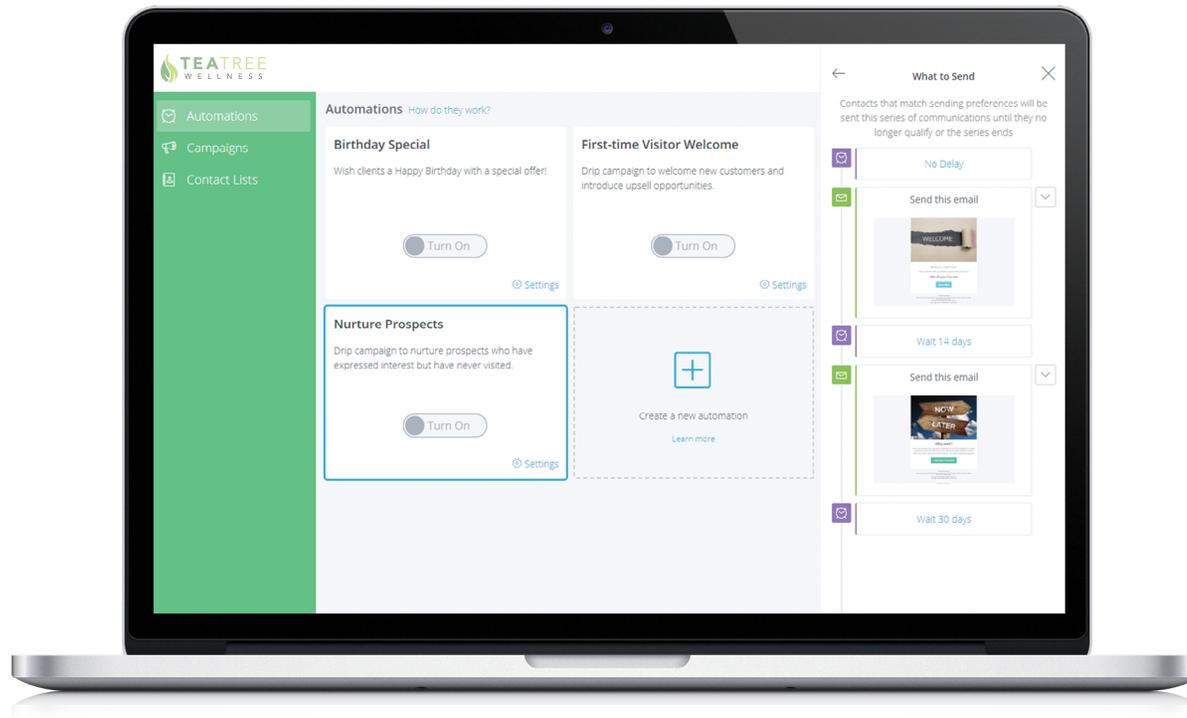
Incorporating emails sent directly from a staff member's inbox is a powerful way to build meaningful connections and take your [sales process](#) to the next level. Although these emails may follow a template, customization is key—use your customer's first name, ask about a recent service or product purchase, etc. Whether they're a brand-new customer or a long-time client, a simple, direct email can have just the right personal touch to make a big impact.

Email marketing basics

Determining an email provider

Before you send out your first email, you'll need to set up an account with a reputable email software provider. Unlike your regular inbox (which works great for direct emails), an email provider lets you send campaigns to large groups of contacts, grow and manage your subscriber list, and track your results—all within one platform.

Many savvy (and busy) business owners opt for [automated marketing software](#) to create automated emails that are both easy to manage and effective. If this sounds like you, you'll want to look for a software that has the ability to send hyper-targeted content to customers, without additional, day-to-day work on your part. Luckily, you don't have to choose between sending newsletters or automated messages; there are email software providers that offer both capabilities.



Building your subscriber list

The success of any email marketing strategy starts with a subscriber list. Don't be discouraged if your list is small at first; it'll grow organically as you communicate the benefits of opting in and continue to provide meaningful content. When building your list, be sure to:

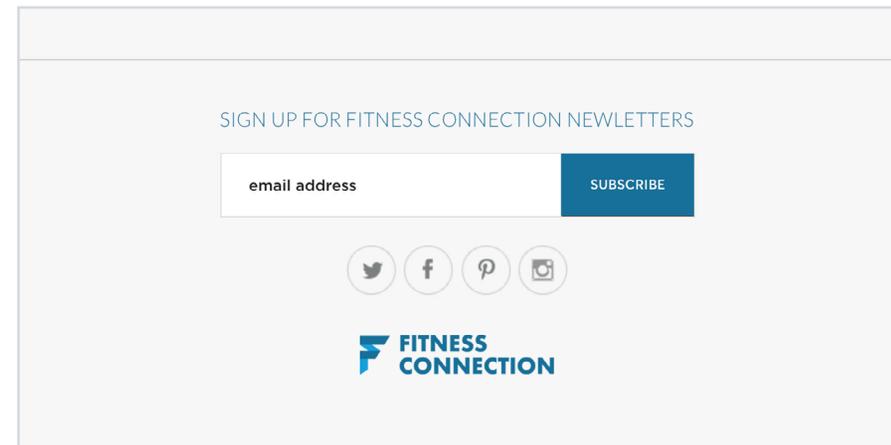
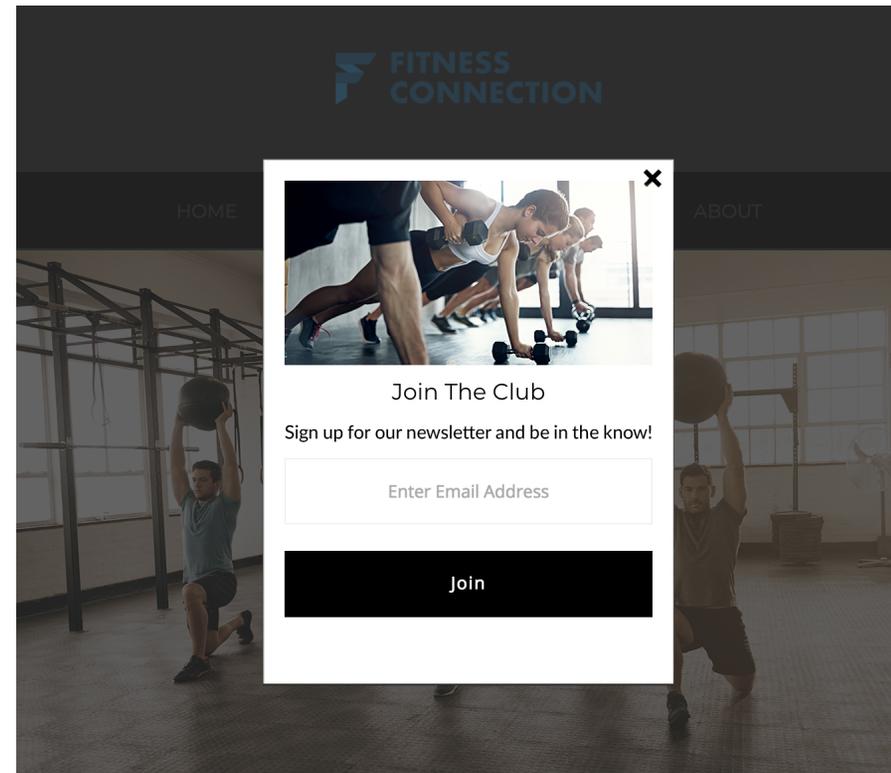
Ask permission. First and foremost, permission is key. Your customers don't provide their contact information lightly. Legislation like [Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation](#), or CASL, and [General Data Protection Regulation](#), or GDPR, requires businesses to receive express consent before sending marketing or promotional emails. If you partner with an email software provider, they may have CASL and GDPR-compliant practices built in—double-check with your provider and make sure you clearly understand the regulations.

Ask everywhere. Consider all of your customer touch points and see where you can ask them to sign up for your email marketing. Again, make sure your customer is actively checking a box or clicking a button to express their consent.

Give them a reason to join. Sometimes the content in your emails is reward enough. That being said, incentives work really well, too. Try a giveaway or freebie to encourage prospective and existing customers to opt in.

Be straightforward. Set expectations with your subscribers. Tell them how often you'll be in their inbox, the type of content they should expect, and how it will benefit them. Then, stick to the cadence and the content you've promised.

Offer opt-out. The [CAN-SPAM Act](#) requires an unsubscribe link in the footer of each of your emails. It's better to let readers remove themselves from your list than have them mark spam, which can negatively impact the deliverability of your future emails.



Use a simple pop-up or sign-up form on your website to encourage clients to opt-in to your newsletter.

Scheduling your emails

The timing of your emails is often just as important as the content inside. When you distribute an email campaign on the right day, at the right time, more subscribers will open, read, and engage with your content. When's the best time to schedule an email? It depends. Every subscriber list is different and what works best for one business might not work well for another. It's important to test regularly to find out when your list responds best.

That being said, there are a couple of best practices to give you a foundation:



Weekdays tend to work best. Studies show that weekdays are best for both open rates and click-through-rates. Although the day of the week doesn't make a significant difference, **some experts** have found opens are highest on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.



Most people open their emails in the morning. Especially on business days, morning distributions are effective, with highest open-rates happening between 10-11 AM, regardless of time-zone. With this **research** in mind, it's worth scheduling your distributions in the morning to reach your early-bird customers.

Test—and retest. Once again, you'll need to test various days and times to figure out which works best for your unique subscriber list.

Creating a must-read email

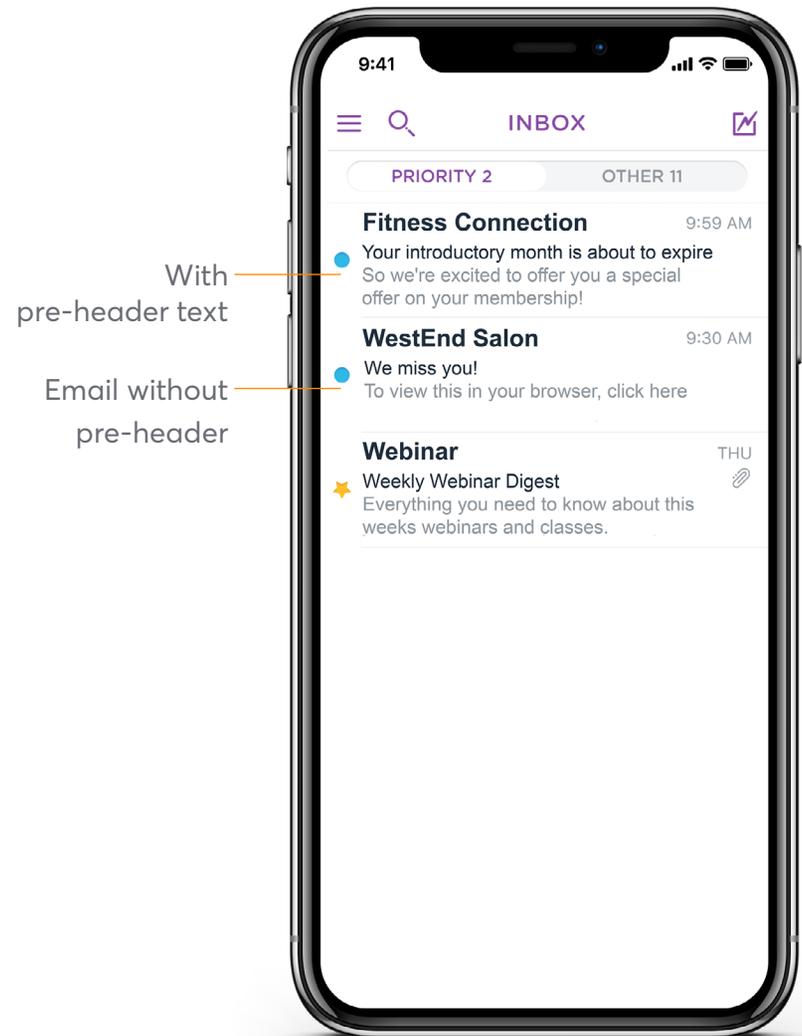
Ready to craft a compelling and impactful email? It starts with a few, simple best practices. Keep these in mind when drafting your next campaign, and you'll feel extra confident hitting send.

Subject lines are key—and so is preheader text

A subject line can make or break your email. So much so that [35% of email recipients open emails based on the subject line alone](#). Optimize yours with these tips:

- **Be clear and clever.** This is the time to be creative, not cryptic.
- **Keep it short (four to seven words).** After seven words, your subject line will likely get cut off, especially on mobile devices.
- **Avoid spam triggers.** These will impair delivery on services like Gmail, Yahoo, etc. Steer clear from all caps, excessive exclamation points and question marks, as well as hyperbolic phrases like "act now", "lowest price", "free", etc. Double-check [this list](#) to reduce your chances of being marked spam.

Preheader text is the short summary that follows the subject line when an email is viewed in the inbox. Oftentimes, it acts as an extension of, and can be as important as, your subject line. Some providers automatically pull from the first line of your email, so be sure you test and write accordingly.





Content matters

The content in your email determines whether or not your reader will engage with what you've sent. What's the ultimate goal of your campaign—Drive clicks to a specific blog post? Boost customer referrals? Increase attendance at an event? Think of the specific action you want readers to take, then write content that aligns.

When building your email content, consider:

- **Does this provide real value?** You might think the new wallpaper at your business is important but will your customer?
- **Is it too long?** Like you, your audience is busy; they probably don't have time, or want, to read an extremely long email. Keep your email short and simple and link out to your website for more context when necessary.
- **Is it true to my brand?** Your email marketing should highlight your brand personality and align with the voice on your website, your social media, etc. Stay authentic to your brand and your emails will resonate.

Design is important, too

Content may be king, but your email's aesthetic will either support or distract from your message. Compelling email design grabs attention and motivates your reader to respond to your calls to action (CTAs). Consider these elements:

Organization: First and foremost, your email should be organized and easy to read. Here's how:

- Start with a header at the top of your email to ensure the reader knows who it's from as soon as they open it.
- Separate content into sections with clear titles that introduce the body copy. Remember: less is more; according to [Hubspot](#), emails with less than 200 words perform best.
- Include high-quality and branded imagery but only when it adds to your content. [Constant Contact](#) has found that emails with three images or fewer (not including logos or social media icons) perform best. Your text-to-image ratio should be about 80% text and 20% imagery to avoid triggering spam filters.
- Finish off with a footer that includes links to your social media accounts and website

Font: To ensure readability, stick to one font throughout your email and use common options like Arial or Helvetica. Font size is important to consider as well, especially on mobile. For body copy, use at least an 11-point font. For headlines, use at least a 22-point font.

Color: You'll want to keep your colors on brand but never at the expense of legibility. Stay away from using too many colors and from using anything too bright. In general, the most easy-to-read combinations are dark text on light backgrounds.



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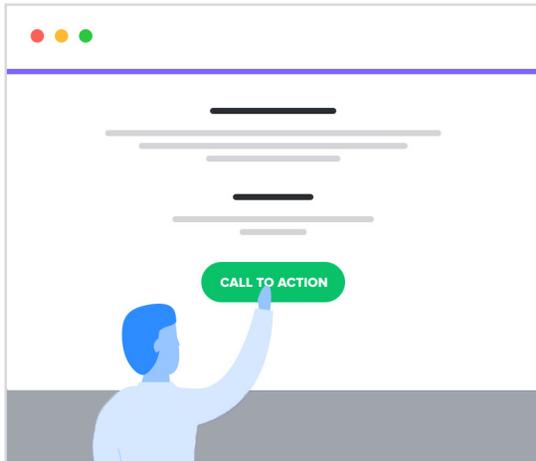
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Calls to Action (CTAs): You want readers to take action from your email—CTAs are the way to make it happen. Whether it's to click to your website for more information or to make a purchase, each CTA should have a specific purpose as well as a visual design, like a button, that makes it simple for the reader to engage.

CTA best practices:

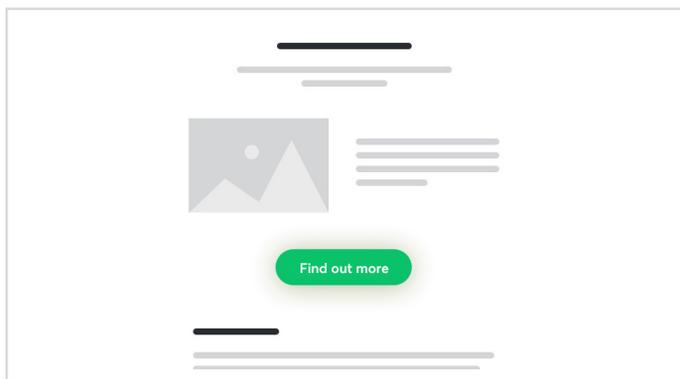
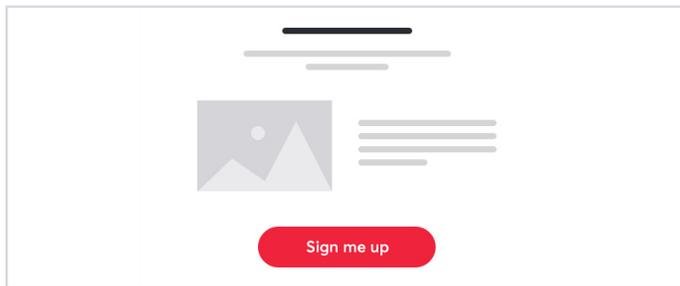
Keep CTAs clear and simple. Make sure they're easy to read and easy to click. Placement is also key; keep your CTA "above the fold" so if opened on a desktop computer, readers won't have to scroll down to take action.

Be compelling. Use actionable phrases that create excitement. Rather than "sign up" or "learn more," try "check out our schedule" or "add me to the list."

Limit your links. Don't exceed more than three CTAs. The more you include, the less likely your reader will take action on any of them. If you find you have more than three things you want readers to do, it might warrant a separate email altogether.

Prioritize their order. Your first call to action is often the most engaged with. If you have more than one CTA in your email body, make sure you put your most important one first to give it the attention it deserves.

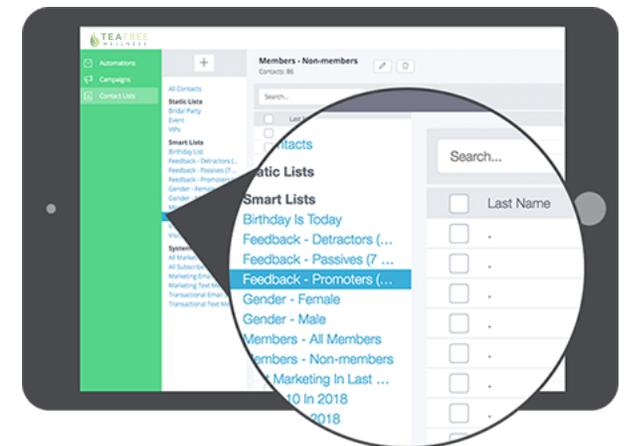
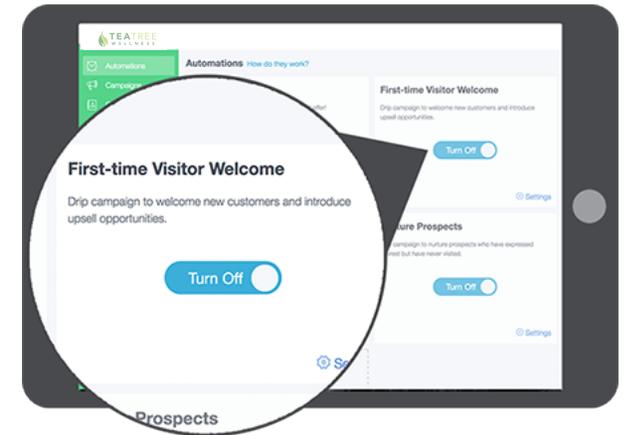
Test on mobile. Your CTA formatting might look great on a desktop computer, but that doesn't mean it will translate to mobile devices. Always send a test email to ensure your CTA buttons are sized and placed with phone and tablet readers in minds.



Automating your email marketing

So you've decided to automate your email marketing. With the right automated software, you'll be able to bring back lost customers, drive word of mouth, and keep clients up to date with the latest happenings at your business. Some features to look for include:

- **Customizable templates that align with your brand.** You've worked hard to develop your brand—your email marketing should be an extension of just that. Look for a completely integrated email editor and access to customizable templates to get you started.
- **Personalized email campaigns.** Just because an email is automated, doesn't mean it should be any less personal. Even better: look for a software that includes personalized text messages to reach customers wherever they are.
- **Smart lists that are automatically created and updated, based on criteria pulled from your appointment management system.** These lists sync with your business management system and enable your automated emails to be customized to the right customer based on a variety of factors, including visit history, feedback rating, and more.
- **Drip campaigns with custom rewards, birthday wishes, and/or timely upsell offers.** Nurture prospects and customers, no matter where they are in their journey. Whether you're looking to, convert new visitors to members, or **encourage referrals** from loyal customers, drip campaigns send the right message at the right time. The best part is you can set and forget them; using smart lists, your automated software will do the rest.
- **Robust reporting.** The right email marketing software will go beyond click-through and open rates and track the metrics that really matter to your business, including claimed offers, booked appointments, and more.



Analyzing your results

Setting strategic goals for your email marketing program is important to decide whether or not your messaging is effective. Robust email marketing and automation platforms make this easy with dashboards that show key statistics to help determine if your emails are as powerful as they can be. Here are a few metrics you might want to track:

Open rate: Your open rate shows the percentage of recipients who opened your email and can help determine what timing (day and time) is best for future distributions. Open rate can also indicate the effectiveness of your subject line and preheader text. What's ideal? Forty percent is the industry average for fitness/beauty, according to [HubSpot](#).

Click-through-rate: Click-through-rate, or CTR, is a metric that measures success directly by showing the percentage of recipients that engaged with your content by the action of 'clicking.' Did your content resonate with your audience? Your CTR will let you know. [The average CTR, across all industries, is 7.06%](#).

Unsubscribe rate: Unsubscribes represent the subscribers who've requested to opt out of receiving your emails. A few unsubscribes here and there is to be expected; a jump in your unsubscribe rate, however, is a sign to revisit your strategy. [The average unsubscribe rate is 0.02%](#).

The most advanced email marketing dashboards will highlight metrics that align directly with overall business and revenue goals and may include the following:

New appointments: The number of appointments booked by a client as a result of receiving a marketing communication.

Rescued clients: Clients who were dormant but have re-engaged with your business as a result of one of your emails.

Referral offers shared/claimed/booked: Clients who've either shared or taken advantage of referral offers.

38

New Appointments

\$3,164

Estimated Revenue

10

Rescued Clients
Won Back After 120 Days

7

New Text Opt-ins
for Promotional Texts

1

Leads Captured
for Packages & Membership

0

Referral Offers Shared
Through Email and Social

0

Referral Offers Claimed
as New Customer Leads

0

Referral Offers Booked
as Brand New Customers



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