



## **The Evolving Role of Email Marketing:**

**A three-part roundup of expert opinions and practical advice**

### **Part I: The State of Email in 2015**

As smartphones have become increasingly common and many—particularly the millennial generation—have turned to texting as their go-to method of communication, some have questioned the future of email as a means of communication in personal and professional settings.

Will email go away? Will it remain relevant? These are very much the same questions that have been asked of other forms of communication: Will email replace “snail mail?” Will online chat replace phone calls? “Yes” and “yes” in some cases, but certainly not in all. In fact, industry experts and marketing practitioners point to a number of reasons that email is likely to remain a very viable element in any marketer’s toolkit—along with strategies and tips for using this tool most effectively.

### **Email Still Matters: To Marketers, and Consumers!**

Even in an increasingly mobile environment, email remains a viable option, according to research done by Yesmail, which was reported in their [Email Marketing Compass report](#).

Mobile-driven conversions are up 70 percent year-over-year from the fourth quarter of 2013 to the fourth quarter of 2014. The growth in sales driven through mobile has been significant, and email can certainly play a part in that.

Makenzi Lindamood, marketing manager for [Stirista, LLC](#), a marketing firm headquartered in San Antonio, with offices in Kenya and India, points to a 2014 Econsultancy article that also showed an increase in sales from email marketing—23 percent in 2014, compared to just 18 percent in 2013. Email marketing, she predicts, “will continue to increase as companies find it’s still relevant and has excellent ROI.”

“I would go so far as to say that classic adage: ‘what’s old is new again,’” says Colin Darretta, founder and CEO of [WellPath Solutions](#), a company that sells customized nutritional solutions. For himself and for other CEOs in start-up firms, he says, email is proving to be a very effective method of customer acquisition. “You have the ability to talk, unencumbered, directly to your target customer—provided you have a good email list,” Darretta says. Of course, those discussions—and any resulting sales—will never happen if your email isn’t opened! That’s a foundational “must have” that is often overlooked—or not considered carefully enough—by many marketers.

### **Strategic Targeting and Segmentation**

Like any marketing endeavor, email marketing should begin with a well-formulated strategy. Unfortunately, that’s a step that is often overlooked. Jennifer Garcia, partner and CEO with [Red Bamboo Marketing](#) in Red Bank, New Jersey, says marketers need to be clear about their overall goal of using of email marketing, and they need to develop a strategy to support that goal. “The strategy is the *how* you are going to reach your goal,” she points out. “It needs to be pretty specific, including who, what, when, where and how.”

In addition, Garcia says, marketers can be more successful attracting the attention of their audiences by using segmentation. “Make sure that you look at your database, and segment it appropriately so you can target different segments a little bit differently,” she suggests. That’s important to help create messaging that will gain the audience’s attention—and action. Christopher Fox, Ph.D., managing partner with [Syncrexis, LLC](#), a healthcare marketing consultancy based in Los Angeles, agrees. “In most cases, email lists are still under-segmented,” he says. “In other words, you are sending emails that are not targeted precisely enough.

Recipients don’t find your emails relevant to their needs or interests.” Making the effort to target more specifically will pay dividends, Fox says, and there are many tools that can help marketers do that based on attributes like gender, age, location, past buying behavior, etc.

“Email platforms such as [intercom.io](#) or [customer.io](#) have enabled SaaS owners and bloggers like me to target users based on what they have done on my website and in my SaaS tool,” says Sean Si, CEO and founder of [SEO Hacker](#). These tools, unlike those such as AWeber or MailChimp,

represent a “huge leap” because they allow targeting based on behavior. “Behavioral targeting is the best thing that has ever happened to email marketing,” Si says.

“If you’re still sending your entire subscription list the same content without any attempt to segment your lists or tailor your message, you’re going to find yourself behind the times at the end of 2015,” says Marissa Mendel, who leads email marketing services at [thunder:tech](#), an integrated marketing firm based in Cleveland.

“As consumers get bombarded with more marketing messages every day from digital media, email marketers need to keep all messages as relevant and engaging as possible these days,” says Mendel. “Segmenting subscribers by interest, purchase history, location or other factors is a great way to increase the chance that users will open and click a brand’s email content.”

Additionally, says Mendel, marketers should be using email marketing software that allows them to elevate their campaigns as their lists grow, whether through segmentation, automation or other tactics. “We like to encourage brands to A/B test one factor in every email they send, so we’re always gathering new data and understanding the target audience a little more each time,” she says.

As experts attest, email, done right, can still resonate—at a fraction of the cost of traditional marketing efforts. Next up: best practices for cutting through the clutter and resonating with your audiences.

### **Additional Tips:**

“As marketers, we have to always focus on building real business value through all channels, and email marketing is no exception. Delivering relevant messages and creating value for recipients remains a constant strategy, and, in 2015, mobile compatibility is more important than ever. Proper formatting should be factored into a marketing strategy to successfully reach the ever growing mobile audience. Last, but not least, opportunities abound to add marketing automation to the mix, ensuring that your message hits the target consumer, with the right information, at the ideal time. Nurturing leads through the sales funnel is an opportunity for success that applies to all marketing strategies in today’s world.”

Ashley Prewitt  
Manager  
[Intermark Group Small Business Division](#)

“The methods of how we reach people are sophisticated, and those people maybe as well, but you still need to connect to them. There is still that ‘human’ element to marketing that drives what we do. If you remember from elementary school, ‘keep it simple stupid.’ Don’t try so hard to come across as anything but who you are. If you make your emails personal and to the point,

no matter how you send them, people will be way more receptive. What would you want to read in the email you send? What is their pain point? Take that perspective before you write and send anything. Then when you do write an email, keep it professional but also personable. When you do that, it doesn't matter how sophisticated the technology or people are.”

Ian St. Clair  
Content Manager  
[Clicks and Clients](#)

“The most successful digital marketers leverage highly-targeted, timely, and personalized email communications to attract, nurture, and convert their ideal customers. Scheduled email newsletters and sales promotions are no longer an effective approach to email marketing. Savvy marketers are leveraging marketing automation to deliver the right message at the ideal time. Marketers must first think through all of the ways in which a potential customer interacts with their brand and then develop relevant email content specific to those interactions.”

Brandi Starr  
President & Marketing Strategist  
[Cassius Blue Consulting](#)

“E-mail marketing in 2015 is about maintaining a story narrative with your customer base. It is important to personalize the email experience based on customer behavior and experience. Content always needs to be targeted and relevant to a person's likes and wants. If you expect them to click and engage your marketing efforts, make sure that you segment properly so that what you are sending out will hold individualized interest. Technology is the key to properly running your email marketing efforts in 2015.”

Matthew Reischer, Esq.  
Marketing VP  
[Legal Marketing Pages Corp.](#)

“Rather than mass emailing, subscriber groups are segmented by demographic, behavior and/or geography to make them more relevant and to recipients. Additionally, a newer SEM technique, Gmail Sponsored Promotions (GSPs), targets online users via email advertisements rather than web searches. Bidding with other companies for key words may place your brand's website on the first page of search results, yet GSP can place your banner and/or link directly into a target consumers email account. Differentiating opportunities are endless.”

Leora Lanz and Sachin Suri  
[Prognosis Digital](#)

## **NEXT UP: BEST PRACTICES IN EMAIL MARKETING**