

The Ultimate Guide to Email Marketing in Boring Industries

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Introduction

Today's marketing landscape is constantly shifting with new digital channels being created almost daily. But one thing has remained consistent over the past two decades: email marketing is a highly effective way to engage your audience. In fact, [according to Salesforce's 2015 study](#), 73% of marketers believe email marketing is core to their business.

A few more eye-opening email marketing stats from Salesforce:

- For every \$1 spent, \$44.25 is the average return on email marketing investment (Experian)
- 77% of consumers prefer to receive permission-based marketing communications through email (ExactTarget)
- 72% of B2B buyers are most likely to share useful content via email (Earnest Agency)

These statistics would indicate that a well-executed B2B email marketing campaign can generate more engagement, more leads, and more sales.

Then why is it that so many B2B marketers struggle to get email marketing to work for them? Most likely because B2B relationships are very different from B2C relationships. With B2C's, the marketers job is to tap into the emotions of the consumers in an effort to convince them to buy.

But B2B sales rely solely on logic. When dialoguing with other businesses, marketers have to understand the reasoning behind each and every purchasing decision and focus on things that matter most to the prospect, namely time, money and resources.

And how do marketers connect with B2B prospects and communicate this understanding while offering business solutions? Through engaging email content that educates and entertains.

But how, you may be wondering, can you create engaging emails when you happen to work in an industry that is notoriously boring? The truth is, though your particular industry may seem boring to a significant part of the world's population, it's simply not boring to warm leads. If you legitimately have a solution to a problem, it stands to reason that the people with that problem won't find you or your products and services boring in the least.

Whether it's getting minimal open and click-through rates or having poor quality and growth of your subscriber database, if you're struggling with your B2B email marketing, this guide will help you to develop an effective email marketing strategy no matter what industry you're in.

What B2B Customers *Really* Want

Before we get into the mechanics of developing a solid email marketing strategy and crafting effective messaging, let's first discuss the difference between B2C and B2B customers.

Convincing B2C consumers to choose your product or service over those offered by your competitors essentially boils down to offering them a similar product or service that is either half the price or twice as good.

Though B2B consumers are also interested in quality goods and fair pricing, they tend to be driven by totally different needs. Unless you cater to these needs, it doesn't matter how incredible your email content is, you won't get the sale.

They Need You to Stay on the Scene

Your prospects hate the idea of you making a quick sale and then passing them off to someone in your sales support office. Let them know that you will be available to them beyond the sale. Understand that oftentimes, making a purchasing decision means putting their job on the line, so be on your customer's side and assure them you will be there for support.

They Need You to Want to Understand Their Business

Want to show prospects that buying from you will be different and better? Convince them of it by doing your homework and research their company before meeting with them. Why should they answer questions that you can easily find the answers to on your own? Taking the time to research shows you have a desire to understand their goals, objectives and pain points.

They Need You to Make Things Simple

No consumer really cares about product or service features, they just want to know how you can help them and they want that explained in one or two easy to read sentences. Make it easy for your prospects to do business with you.

They Need You to be Innovative

Your prospects are good at creating their own opportunities and solving their own problems. What they need you to do is offer methods they wouldn't happen upon during in-house meetings.

If you can meet all of these needs and develop your email marketing strategy around them, you have a very good chance of forming long-term customer relationships.

Developing Your B2B Email Marketing Strategy

As we've already mentioned, B2B relationships are different from B2C relationships and marketers have to take a somewhat different approach to email content. When it comes to developing your B2B email marketing strategy, here are some specifics to consider when preparing messaging for your campaigns:

Longer Sales Cycles

B2B sales cycles are much longer than B2C, typically lasting several weeks to several months, and in some cases, a year or longer. Understand that these longer sales cycles will require you to create marketing content that addresses each part of this stretched-out cycle.

Relationship Driven

While you can say that building relationships is the key to all commerce, it is especially true in B2B sales cycles. These longer sales cycles will give you plenty of opportunity to build connections, which is important, because sometimes these connections will rise above all other factors during a decision-making process.

Niche Target Marketing

One of the nice things (or you could say the 'niche' things) about B2B email marketing is that marketers generally have a more defined target audience. With this benefit comes the added responsibility of crafting targeted and relevant content.

Group Purchasing Decisions

Educating your audience is even more critical to sales in B2B where decisions are often made by a group of people. Use your email marketing campaigns to provide a continuous stream of educational content such as information sheets, presentations and other collateral that can ultimately influence the final purchasing decision. The goal of these emails is to get them forwarded to the right person or people within the organization who will ultimately have the power to decide.

Help Your Audience do Their Research

B2B buyers are experts at conducting Internet research along the buying process. That research will typically consist of competitive analysis, data gathering, and a review of third party feedback in the form of testimonials and comments. All of this research, along with various marketing messages, will factor into a thoughtful decision-making process.

To stand out from the competition you would be wise to just help your audience with their online research by providing links to as much relevant information as possible. Help your audience by leading them to your best content.

Speak to the Organization

It's not one person, or even a small group of people, who will ultimately use your product or service, it is an entire organization. Understand that a purchasing decision is a significant investment of money, time and resources for all staff and management and will be based on how your offer increases productivity and revenue – period.

Make sure your email messaging speaks to the quality of the support you offer, integration compatibility (if that is an issue), and any other benefits you feel would help a prospect be comfortable with what you have to offer.

Creating Content for “Boring” Industries

Sure, it doesn't seem fair that some marketers get to write about places of interest in Paris or the new fusion restaurant that opened up downtown. Some industries are just “sexier” than others, but that doesn't mean your content has to be a snoozefest.

Here are some ways *even you* can craft engaging emails your B2B prospects will enjoy reading:

Focus on Helping

Something to always remember: content will never be boring to people who actually need it. As long as your main focus is on helping people rather than selling to them, you will automatically have a built-in audience hungry for your emails. Don't worry about not being a “good” enough or “creative” enough writer to make your educational content pop, just make sure you are providing the most relevant information possible.

Forget the Business Jargon

Don't think you will ever impress a prospect with your industry lingo, you will simply bore them into unconsciousness. This is particularly important when crafting emails. You don't have much time to hook your reader. If you start spilling a bunch of business mumbo-jumbo and terminology they will click out of your email very quickly. Just write naturally and give solid advice. Why make life harder for people?

Use Humor

You don't have to be a Hollywood writer to inject some humor into your email campaigns. By doing so you'll not only add a bit of pop and life to a somewhat dull topic, you'll also make it much more fun for yourself to write. So go ahead, as long as it won't detract from the overall meaning and objective of your content, add some jokes or make a silly pop culture reference.

Make the Complex Simple

Oftentimes people use the terms "boring" and "confusing" interchangeably. If you can simplify the complex, you can turn a boring topic into an interesting one. Here's a perfect example: Most human beings will fall into a deep slumber if they attempt to listen to a PhD speak about dark matter. But those same people will be on the edge of their seats listening to Morgan Freeman speak about the same subject in *"Through the Wormhole."*

If you work in a complex industry and are marketing to those who may not be subject matter experts, introduce new concepts in simple terms and relatable analogies so your audience can understand everything you say.

Get to Your Point

Today's modern human has a very short attention span and even less patience. If your industry topic isn't particularly interesting, then you had better get to your point as quickly as possible. If you are not good with brevity, find another member on your staff who *is* or consider hiring a freelance editor who can take your 300 word email and boil it down to a much friendlier 100-word version.

This point is particularly important when you consider that consumers spend [60% of their time online on their mobile devices](#). If your content is too long and difficult to read, your message will simply be abandoned. Easy-to-read mobile experiences are incredibly important in today's digital marketing environment.

Be Visual

Who says all of your content has to be textual in nature? People love images and videos. So when trying to impart information that may not be utterly riveting, consider turning that into an infographic or a short video that will get your message across in a much more entertaining way.

Where to Find Content Ideas

Ready to create some email content but not sure where to begin? Here are a few places you can look to get started:

1. Client Questions

You most likely have a wellspring of topic ideas right under your own fingertips. Ask your sales team and even your customers about some of the most common questions they have in regards to your product and service. Every single one of these questions can be used to create a helpful piece of content that you can share with your readers.

2. Current Industry News

Consider customizing your Google news feed so that you receive alerts about trends or buzz within your industry. Social media sites like Twitter are another great place to find industry buzz topics your readers might be interested in knowing more about.

3. Tap into Your Customer's Life

Okay, so let's say you're selling office furniture. In theory not the most glamorous or exciting business. But think of it from your prospect's point of view: if they are furnishing an office space it may be because they have just opened their very first business. This is then most likely a very exciting and somewhat scary time for them. Creating content around these events in your customers' lives will help you to easily connect.

B2B Email Marketing Best Practices

Now that you know what your B2B customers ultimately want, how to craft emails that aren't dull, and where to get topic ideas, let's wrap it up by covering some of the most important B2B email marketing best practices.

Segment Your Database

Nothing converts leads better than relevant messaging. If you want each and every one of your emails to be relevant to your prospect, then [segment your database](#) into various lists. [Data from HubSpot](#) shows that marketers who segmented their subscriber lists saw an increase in click-through rates.

A/B Test Your Emails

A/B testing your email campaigns will give you the necessary insights to achieve growth and conversions. Test for subject lines, visuals used, length of content, language, button placement, absolutely everything you can think of. The data you glean from your testing can be used to send future email campaigns that are fully optimized.

Think Mobile

A [Gartner study](#) revealed that **74% of smartphone users check email on their devices**. Your emails have got to be mobile-friendly at this point in time. You can either invest in a mobile application or use software that automatically configures your content for email. Also, stick to a one-column template because these can easily adapt to multiple screen sizes.

Use Pre-Built Templates

You most likely don't have a lot of time on your hands to try and design and code your own templates. By using pre-built templates you can easily drop in your core content at any time and hit send.

Get Your Timing Right

Timing is incredibly important when it comes to email marketing. When is the best time to send prospects your messaging? As you can imagine, the sweet spot will be different for B2B prospects than it is for B2C audiences. For instance, nights and weekend tend to be a great time to get a B2C consumer to pay attention, but this timing can be deadly in the B2B space.

There will always be exceptions but for the most part, B2B marketers should follow some basic rules in order to increase their chances of having their content read:

- Don't send your emails over the weekend or on Monday as your prospects will be dealing with mountains of Monday morning "stuff" and you're apt to get lost in the shuffle.
- Don't send emails over major holidays and other vacation times of year.
- Don't send emails first thing in the morning or you'll be competing against every other email, phone call and meeting your prospect is juggling.
- Don't send emails at the very end of day or they may be overlooked as your prospect scrambles to get home.

Be Consistent

It's amazing how few marketers think about the importance of consistency of their messaging. Imagine if *Game of Thrones* was on one week, and then three weeks later it was on again, then it was on two days later and then off for another 2 months. This would drive you mad and you'd eventually stop watching.

Your business will seem more organized and credible if you stick to an email schedule.

Conclusion

B2B email marketing is something your organization should recognize as a vital component to your overall marketing objectives and business growth. The biggest takeaway in this guide has hopefully been that no industry is really that boring. The thing to remember is, if you have customers and those customers have needs, you have opportunities to share great content by educating and offering solutions to problems.