



# Ten Email Marketing Metrics You Can't Afford To Ignore



by Kevin Gao, CEO & Founder **Comm100**

Take a close look at your existing email marketing program. Is it performing to your expectations, or has it hit a plateau? Perhaps it never delivered the results that you were hoping for to begin with. Or, perhaps you're one of the few companies not leveraging email as an integrated channel in your marketing mix and want to know what metrics matter and how you can ensure optimal performance in those areas.

Whether you're establishing a new email marketing program or looking for ways to improve your existing email marketing program, the following ten metrics and the ways in which you can generate better results with them can get you there. In an email marketing campaign, improving only one key performance metric can exponentially improve your entire program. Here's where to start.

## 1. Overall Engagement: Target and Segment

**What is this metric?** Overall engagement is the “big picture” metric of your email program. It's a look at the “health” of your email list, including open rate, click-through rate, purchase rate, spam complaints, unsubscribe requests, and email shares and forwards. If your metrics are, as a whole, high, then you should begin looking at the more granular metrics below to find “holes” in your program. However, if your metrics overall are low, then you should address the overall user engagement picture to improve your campaigns or program.

**Why is this metric important?** The short answer is: “Because if your users aren't engaged with your emails, it means that they don't find them useful.” That, of course, leads to fewer sales, less loyal customers, fewer page views or company contacts, and even disheartened clients or customers.

**How to improve overall user engagement in emails:** What you're trying to establish with your overall engagement metrics is whether your subscribers find your email important, relevant, or useful. The best way to ensure that they do is to segment your email marketing list or database and then to develop a tracking strategy. Begin by sorting your users and followers into groups of common demographics and interest. Then craft emails specifically tailored to them. Make sure that you follow up by tracking the response rate to each email send so that you can identify both the best list segments as well as the best messages, offers, and content to send to them.

## 2. Inbox Deliverability: Getting There is Half the Battle

**What is this metric?** How many times have you scanned through your junk or spam folder in your email client and seen how many emails end up there? In many cases, they may even be valuable emails that you would have wanted to see or read when you received them. Inbox deliverability is the percentage of your email that is delivered to your recipients' email inboxes instead of their spam or junk folders. It may vary by email service provider or email client, or it may be a problem systemic to all of your email sends.

**Why is this metric important?** Much like you, your subscribers probably don't check their junk or spam folders very often (if at all). If your email is going to junk or spam, your message most likely isn't getting noticed by its intended recipients.

**How to improve your inbox deliverability:** Inbox deliverability is one of the most complicated parts of email marketing and worthy of its own whitepaper. However, there are some basic tricks that can help to keep you in the inbox. Reduce the number of images in your email and replace them with text. Test your email pre-send to various email service providers to check to make sure that it goes into the inbox rather than

to the spam or junk folder. Then make adjustments to wording and subject lines. Also, remove inactive users (subscribers who haven't opened an email in a long time) from your mailing list. Many email service providers assign your company a quality score based on user engagement. Removing inactive users can improve your score and improve your chances of being delivered to the inbox.

### 3. Open Rate: Test Subject Lines Against Each Other

**What is this metric?** Open rate is the number of subscribers who opened your email, expressed as a percentage of the total number of deliverable email addresses that you sent to. It should be noted that, because open rate is tracked using an image which may not load in all email clients, most open rate percentages are never entirely accurate.

**Why is this metric important?** If nobody is opening your email, then why send it? It might be argued that open rate is your most important email metric. Not only does a poor open rate lower your sender reputation score with email service providers, but you can't make any money, generate sign-ups, or inspire an action from your email program if nobody is actually looking at your email!

**How to improve your open rate:** If you're successfully delivering your email to your subscribers' inboxes, then open rate is almost entirely determined by the quality of your subject line. In order to improve your open rate, you'll want to dedicate time and effort, as well as list-split A/B testing to improving your subject lines. You should also consider removing inactive email addresses from your mailing list to avoid low open rates that negatively impact your sender reputation score with email service providers.

### 4. Click-Through Rate: Sometimes More is Better

**What is this metric?** Click-through rate is the number of times, expressed as a percentage, which the people who opened your email clicked from your email to your landing page or website. It should be noted that click-through rate is sometimes presented as a one-to-one ratio (even if one person clicks many times, it is still counted as one click) and sometimes as a one-to-many ratio (all clicks count, even if they are from the same person).

**Why is this metric important?** Typically, you don't generate revenue, inspire an action, or convey a message to a user simply from a subscriber reading your email. Your users will need to click from your email to your landing page or website in order for you to realize your final goal. If your click-through rate is low, then you need to improve it in order to get more users to the destinations where they can actually finalize the task that your email is motivating or inspiring them to do.

**How to improve your click-through rate:** There are three tricks that you can use to improve your click-through rate. The first is to simply use more links within your email. Don't make an email that is all links, as it will likely be sent to the spam or junk folder. However, make sure that there is a link for at least each 100 words of text. Secondly, do not use images or graphic buttons for links. Many of your users won't see your images when they read your email, so they may not be able to find the right spot to click and you'll lose out on website or landing page visits. Finally, use compelling calls to action to encourage users to click on links.

### 5. Landing Page Bounce Rate: Above the Fold Still Matters!

**What is this metric?** Even if you've successfully encouraged people to click-through your email to your landing page, you'll only make money if your users stay on the landing page and transact. A bounce rate is the number of users, expressed as a percentage, who exit your landing page without taking further action or going to another page. The percentage should obviously be as low as possible.

**Why is this metric important?** If your users don't stay on your website or landing page and you don't generate revenue, facilitate sign-ups, convey a message, or inspire an action, then the most important part of your email marketing campaign is negated.

**How to improve your landing page bounce rate metrics:** Landing page development is a marketing tool that you should take time with. However, here are some basic best practices to ensure a low bounce rate. Make sure that all of the major components of your landing page are "above the fold" (in the top half and visible on a typical user's computer screen). Make sure that your landing page delivers what your email promised would be on it and is relevant to what was stated in the email. Finally, be sure to cross-check your landing page in different web browsers. You may be surprised how many times a common cross-browser display mistake can ruin your effectiveness.

## 6. Spam Complaints: Poor Sender Reputation Can Ruin Your Email Program

**What is this metric?** When a user marks you as spam to their email service provider, your email marketing platform will track it and report back on it. Spam complaints are the number of users, both raw and in a percentage form, which complained that your email was spam or junk.

**Why is this metric important?** Once a user marks your email as spam, you will never be able to email them at that email address again without going to the spam folder unless they take action. More importantly, email service providers use the number of spam complaints you receive to decide whether to send all of your emails to the spam or junk folder or whether to send them to the inbox. The more spam complaints you receive, the harder it will be for you to have your email delivered to your users' inboxes.

**How to improve your spam complaint metrics:** The first step to reducing spam complaints is to make the unsubscribe link in your emails prominent and easy-to-find. This may seem counterintuitive, but if a user doesn't want to receive your email then it's better for them to unsubscribe than to mark you as spam. You'll also want to check how often you send email. If you are sending email too often, you will see more frustrated spam complaints. You obviously want to make sure that the content that you're sending is valuable and relevant to your users. Finally, check the integrity of your email list and make sure that you don't have obviously malicious users who are receiving your email only so that they can mark it as spam.

## 7. Unsubscribe Requests: Sometimes Less is More

**What is this metric?** When a user decides to no longer receive email from you, that is an unsubscribe request. This metric is typically shown as both a raw number and as a percentage of the number of people who received the email.

**Why is this metric important?** When people unsubscribe from your email list, you no longer have the legal right to contact them via email. Not only does that diminish your potential sales and revenue leads as well as your ability to communicate with and engage customers, but your email list is a company asset. Every name

that you lose diminishes the value of that asset. In order to keep a healthy and valuable email marketing database, you want as few unsubscribe requests as possible.

**How to improve your unsubscribe request metrics:** As long as you are sending quality content, the most common reason for users to unsubscribe from your email list is that you're sending email too often. Try reducing the amount of email that you send in a month by ten percent. Also, remove users who don't open your emails in most cases from your email list. Those less engaged users are most likely to unsubscribe if they do open on a whim.

Of course, the most essential action that you can take in order to ensure that users do not unsubscribe from (or even mark as spam) your email program is to provide users with quality content. If a user cares about what is in your email and looks forward to the entertainment or information that they will get from it, you won't lose them as a subscriber. Content is king on the internet, and that extends to your email marketing program.

## 8. Email Forwarding and Sharing

**What is this metric?** Part of the power of email marketing is the ease with which subscribers and users can share your content or promotional message with others. With the growth of social media, this expands beyond simply forwarding an email to the ability to also share the email's content on their social networks. This metric tracks, typically, the raw number of forwards or shares that an email receives.

**Why is this metric important?** While the main goal of email marketing is to convert leads or to monetize existing customers, you should also be gaining brand awareness and new customers through it as well. Forwarding and sharing metrics show you if you're successfully accomplishing that.

**How to improve your email forwarding and sharing metrics:** In order to get the most out of email sharing and forwarding, you'll first want to make sure that your email displays properly when it is forwarded. Be sure that your html design won't break down and that your email will still look like an email. You'll also want to be sure that you include a URL of the email content at the top of the email so that users can easily copy and paste that URL if they want to share the email on social networks. Make sure that any social sharing links that you've included in your email are coded with the URL for the email itself. Finally, include the email sharing and forwarding information in prominent positions within the email template.

## 9. Display and Response: Email is Not Print! Control Your Use of Images

**What is this metric?** While not a set metric, the display of your email can contribute to click-through and user engagement metrics in both negative and positive ways. A poor email design and a resulting bad email display can make all of your efforts in email marketing useless.

**Why is this metric important?** It's incredibly easy for novices in email marketing to begin to think of an email template as a print piece and want it to look "pretty." However, at the end of the day, email functionality is more important than graphics and pictures. While best practices for email template design are a greater topic than can be covered in full in this whitepaper, there are tips that you can incorporate to make sure that your email display isn't dragging down your email response rate.

**How to improve your display and response metrics:** If you're using CSS to style your email html, be sure to use inline CSS as many email service providers strip out the header CSS of email templates. Be sure

to apply images that have both alt and title tags so that there are still messages to your users if the image doesn't load. Create an email template that focuses primarily on html and content design and less on images. It's generally advisable to have no more than a third of your email template taken up by images. Don't use images for any messages that a user must read in order to understand or act on the offer in the email.

## 10. Mobile Phones and Tablets: Don't Lose Your Subscribers Because They Can't Read Your Email on a Mobile Platform

**What is this metric?** Have you noticed a potential drop off in your email opens in the last several years? People may still be reading your email, but they may be reading it on a mobile device. If your email isn't optimized or primed for viewing on a mobile device or smart phone, then you may be bleeding users and seeing a decline in metrics.

**Why is this metric important?** Not only is the number of subscribers checking email on a mobile device already a large part of your email list, but the number is growing. If your email program isn't already feeling the impact of mobile reads, then it soon will be.

**How to improve your mobile email engagement metrics:** The first and most obvious thing that you'll need to do is to check your email template display on a small screen. You'll also want to consider reducing the number of images that you use and certainly removing any flash components of your email. Finally, make sure that you are sending a multi-part email message with a text-only version to support text only mobile devices.

### Summary

You want your email marketing program to be as successful as possible. After all, every visitor and every dollar counts. In order to do that, you'll want to break your program down to the basics and to the key performance metrics. Once you have a full understanding of each metric, the role that it plays in your email marketing strategy, and how to improve it, you'll see your email results being to climb upwards.

## About Comm100

Comm100 is the leader in customer service and customer communication software. Comm100 focuses on developing and managing fully integrated customer communication solutions to enable businesses to communicate with their customers more effectively through multiple channels, including [live chat](#), [ticket](#), [email marketing](#), [forum](#), [knowledge base](#) and [help desk](#). As business grows fast, Comm100 has been embraced by over 200,000 businesses around the globe.

## About Comm100 Email Marketing

Comm100 Email Marketing is a professional email marketing service that's fully hosted by Comm100. It offers all the tools you need to implement successful opt-in email marketing campaigns.

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- 97%+ Average Delivery Rate
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