



# Best Practices For Email Marketing

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agillic

# Introduction

In this whitepaper, you will find an overview written explicitly to you as a marketer or configurator with the do's and don'ts within email marketing trends. We have gathered data from partners, clients and experts to give you some 'easy to implement' trends and ideas for you to launch in your everyday work with email marketing in the Agillic Customer Marketing Platform – and even if you are not working in Agillic, there will be some good advice for you.

Email is a powerful communication form. It is a mature medium, alive and kicking. Today, email is by far the preferred communication channel for both B2B and B2C businesses, and it is a golden opportunity for you to talk directly to your customers.

Did you know that more than every 3<sup>rd</sup> Scandinavian checks their email daily? And another 42% checks it up to 3-4 times a day?\*

## Did you know?

**76%**

of people prefer promotional and product related content through emails\*

**54%**

of marketers say increasing engagement rate is their top email marketing priority\*

**75%**

of recipients are more likely to click on emails from segmented campaigns than non-segmented campaigns\*

**73%**

of companies surveyed prioritise mobile device optimisation of emails\*

Emails that include the first name of the recipient in the subject line have higher clickthrough rates than emails that do not\*



John Doe















Hi Poul! This is an email just for you ...



11.43

\* Litmus Live 18

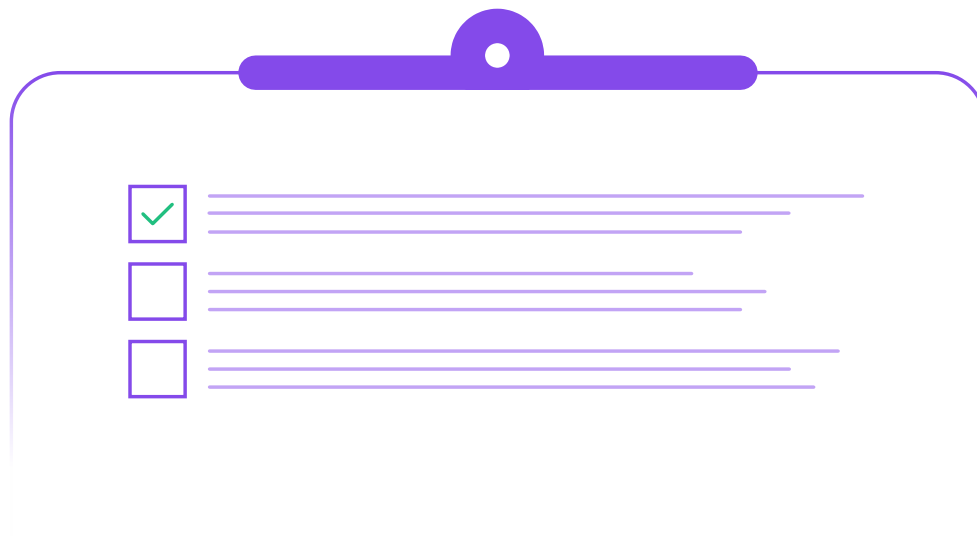
# The email marketing campaign process in 14 steps

-  1. Define the goal of your campaign\*
-  2. If possible, think target group as the first thing
-  3. When creating content, define which elements the email should consist of \*\*
-  4. 1<sup>st</sup> round of proof – ensure that most text is approved, so when testing, links and redirects can be checked
-  5. Set up target group – if you wish to use dynamic target groups in your campaign, define these in this step
-  6. Ensure all links are correct and ready to be pasted in\*\*\*
-  7. Set up the email in content builder and add visuals to support messages
-  8. Set up the flow with the created target group
-  9. Publish to Staging in order to test
-  10. Test with test users
-  11. 2<sup>nd</sup> and last round of proof
-  12. Final approval
-  13. Publish to production
-  14. Go live

\* i.e. Increase open rates, improve click through, sign ups, sales driven from email, education, registrations, referrals, retain or engage customers etc.

\*\* If some content should be in a multi-content block or as a promotion

\*\*\*If we wish to start tracking eg. how many signups we got from the email, we can use this link to create the URL:  
<https://ga-dev-tools.appspot.com/campaign-url-builder/>



# Email marketing campaign checklist

## Ensure that your email reaches your audience

### Clean up

Set up rules to clean your data in order to only send out to active recipients. Remove blacklisted, soft and hard bounces, and consider removing recipients who haven't opened your emails for a longer period of time.

An idea could be to set up a re-activation flow for your “dusty” (not active – as in not opening) recipients, to see if their preferences have changed or they really just want to opt out. No reason to keep them, if they do not add value.

### Segmentation

Segment every campaign based on recipient's behaviour, preferences and opt ins.

### Spam testing

Avoid ending up as junk mail. Take the precautions listed on page 14.

If you haven't already done so, we recommend you set up an automatic opt in / opt out process and have your audience tagged/removed – in order to only send out to subscribers, who have opted in.

# Set up the best condition for the view of your email campaign in your audience's inbox

## From email address

Always use a recognisable and believable address and try to avoid using a do not-reply address.

## From name

Be consistent in the naming of your emails to help your recipients quickly recognise your brand, when scanning their inbox. If you are sending out welcome flows or other flows with more than one email being triggered, make sure to use the same naming convention. Keep it simple and, per our recommendation, use your brand name. If your product or brand is connected to a person that your recipients know, it is possible to use this person's name as sender name. This could increase your conversion rates. However, this is dependent on your brand, product and the person you will use as sender name. That is why it's important to test it. For some of our clients, we can see an increase in the opening and click rates by 12-20% by personalising the emails from, for example, the CEO of the company or the name of the person in customer service they had a chat with earlier. Test it out.

## Preheader text

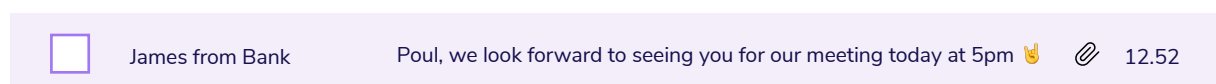
Highlight the most important content of your email or the content, that will catch the interest of your reader – could be the top story of your newsletter, the reader's preferred product.

## Subject line

Keep it short, simple and to the point. 20 – 35 characters.

Depending on your brand, product, purpose of email, strive to be personal and engaging. A/B test your subject lines to see if using the recipient's firstname in the subject line can increase your conversion rate.

Be cautious using emojis in your subject lines – first of all due to spam detectors, but also because it could make your brand and message appear unprofessional. Read more about this on page 8.



We recommend ensuring a red thread in your messaging, brand and content and if an emoji enhances your messaging, go nuts 🙌 Remember to test it 😊

# Setup, design and test your content

## Dynamic content / relevant content

Did you know that in recent years, some of the biggest challenges when working with email marketing campaigns have been poor coordination, lack of internal process and poorly defined email goals? (Litmus Live, 2018)

The challenge of poor coordination between teams results in having campaigns that need to be executed... well preferably yesterday, often end up with a one-size-fits-all approach instead of a personalised email consisting of dynamic content based on data. Hopefully, this is not your everyday work with your email campaigns, and you will in most cases be able to:

Ensure relevant content for your target groups by segmenting your campaigns. This can be done with the following data: behaviour, person data, activity, purchase, interest etc. Always remember to have a customer point of view and ask, "if I were to receive this email, what's in it for me".

Personalise, engage and remember to test!

## Copywriting

Take the time to create great copy and have fun with your copywriting. A good copy can generate emotions and produce the actions you want. Test different tones of voice in your email, but be loyal to the overall company tone of voice.

## Images

Ensure your images are high/good resolution for the different email clients and test that they do not break – you can always control this by either using templates or setting the measurements in the HTML. A rule of thumb is also to remember to add ALT text.

## Video

Videos are impactful for storytelling, but are they always a good idea in emails?

From a technological viewpoint, you have to take the inconsistent support across email clients into consideration.

One of the pros is that the subscribers seem to like videos. However, if you need the subscriber to take action after watching the video, it might not be your best option. You'll miss the option to drive traffic to your website where they can take further action.

Our advice would be to take it case by case and consider what you want to achieve with the video. Currently, many like the idea of the video in their email communication, but in reality video still doesn't quite deliver on its potential.

## **Calls to actions that make recipients want to click**

On page 11, you will be able to find a full list with recommendations on what to consider when setting up your CTAs. Make sure your CTAs are easy to identify by using eg. buttons, keep them to the point and depending on brand and messaging, don't be afraid to be a little creative and playful.

## **Tracking & analytics**

Are you tracking your links?

Each CTA or link that leads away from the email should have its own tracking. Ensure your HTML includes tracking tags whether it is Google Analytics, or whatever tracking system you use, in order for you to analyse the results of your email campaigns.

## **View email online/ in browser**

If your campaign includes images or other rich elements, it might not be able to load in the recipients' email client. Therefore, it is a great idea to always offer your recipients the option to view the email online/in browser.

## **Unsubscribe link**

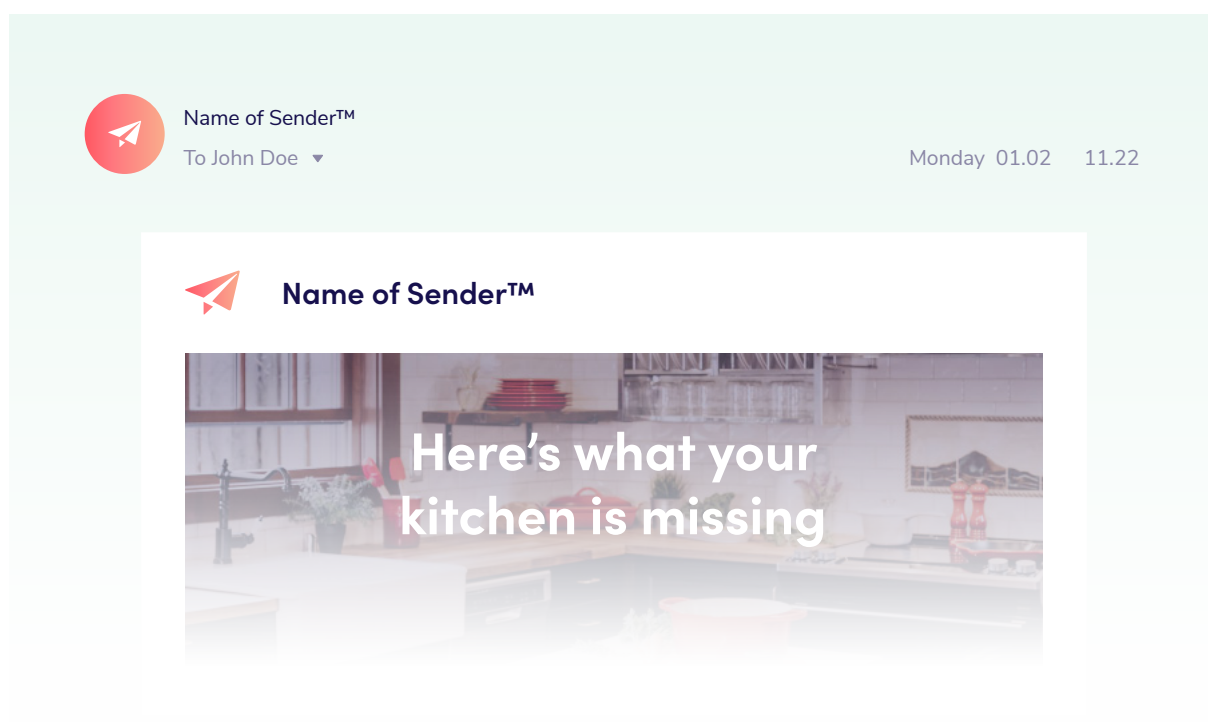
Do you have an easy to find unsubscribe button and does it work?

Make unsubscribing from your email feasible for your recipients and again, keep it simple. The more difficult it is to unsubscribe, the more frustrated the recipient will become. We recommend, to place the unsubscribe link in the bottom of your email, making sure that it is clear and visible and in no way hidden. Additionally, you should inform them that they are unsubscribed and you can introduce a simple questionnaire to understand why they unsubscribed. Check that your unsubscribe link works and that recipients are actually unsubscribed from your email.

## **Ensure message across email / mobile clients**

What does your email look like in different email clients and is your primary recipient opening on mobile, desktop or webmail? We recommend that you test to see which top 3 email clients your recipients are opening your emails in.

In the Nordic market, Outlook, Apple iPhone and Gmail are the 3 top email clients. It's important to note that your message may render differently in these email clients. Therefore, it is important to know that you may not be able to roll out a "Rolls Royce" version of your emails in every email client, as elements can be rendered differently. While your core message remains the same, some design elements may require compromise.



## Making the right first impression

Your subject lines and preheaders can determine the success of your email. As the recipient's first impression, subjects and preheaders are the most sensitive of all things email related. When you get them right, you increase the open rates.



With spam in everyone's inbox, it's not hard for people to recognise it. Spam is out there, and people have learned to recognise it instantly. To ensure higher engagement stay away from flashing wording and fishy content.

### Sender and subject line




As the recipient's first impression of your email, the sender and subject line are important. If the recipient doesn't recognise the sender, they are less likely to open the email, regardless of the subject. After establishing a trustworthy sender, you can focus on the content of the subject line. A successful subject line is concise and to the point. Engage your recipients and provide them the opportunity to read the entire subject line (from the start). Lastly, emails that have the best open rates typically have subject lines that tell the content, rather than sell it. Unless they have specifically signed up for sales notifications, recipients would rather know how they can personally benefit, rather than being sold to.



Take the following examples:

	John Doe	The newest kitchen mixer is here		07.18
	John Doe	Here's what your kitchen is missing		07.18

The second subject line focuses more on what the recipient can gain, rather than selling a product. Additionally, by not naming the product, this subject line draws on the recipient's curiosity, enticing her to open the email.

Newsletter #83: Software updates		14.56
		
Innovative upgrades that can save you time		14.56

If you send emails in the same series once a week or more, we recommend avoiding the words “newsletter” and “update” in your subject line as this signals that the email is part of a series, i.e. repetitive. Instead highlight how the content of the newsletter can benefit the recipient.

## Preheaders

The preheader functions in a similar way as the subject line; a text you can use to tell the recipients what they can expect to find in your email. Thus, the same principle goes for the preheader as with the subject: describe what is inside, rather than sell it. People quickly decide if they want to open an email, so make the preheader short and precise. Additionally, the preheader should be used to supplement the subject, don't spend valuable characters on repeating yourself.

The preheader is a text excerpt of your email generated by email clients to give your readers a preview. It's important to include a preheader at the start of your HTML email templates, otherwise you may find that your preheader text is 'Can't see this email? View it online.' If a preheader is not included, email clients will typically use the first characters of your emails. The character count on preheaders varies in email clients and can be anywhere from a full count on both subject and preheader text, to no display of the preheader. Gmail displays about 100 characters and iPhones display 140.

# Emojicons

Emojicons hold power and can make all the difference in a text, but use them with caution. Messages without visual representation of emotions can run the risk of feeling clinical and sterile, often causing misinterpretation. When you use emojicons to support your text and to express a positive state of mind, it often has a positive effect with your readers.

Imagine creating a positive emotional relation with your readers through a little heart symbol or thumbs up within your emails or subjects and preheaders. What impact could emojicons have on your brand? Some reports show an increase of 10-15% in open rate (Litmus, 2018). Our take on it: a reported increase of 10-15% in open rates makes the experiment worthwhile.

When determining whether to experiment with emojicons or not, note that not all email clients support them. In addition, not all clients support the same symbol. The fallback for unsupportive email clients is a square instead of the icon itself. Also, every client renders an icon individually, meaning Androids might show the icon one way, while iPhones show them differently. This is an important aspect to consider when working with icons.

Go ahead and try them out. Just remember to test.





Click me!

## Call to action

A call to action is an important tool to engage your reader through clicks. It often describes the action of links or buttons which are the centre of attention in your emails and are used to generate traffic to your chosen web destination.

So what do you need to know about them?

- Keep it simple and make it clear what you want the reader to do
- Use engaging and powerful words, but do not make it too long
- Do not use call to actions on an image, it can be confusing and sometimes entirely overlooked
- Make it stand out. Let it have a suitable size on both desktop/web client, as well as mobile clients
- Consider the use of CSS3 animations, but do not overdo it
- Do not make too many. Choices require more effort from the reader
- Make it clear that your call to action is the only thing to consider engaging with. Have a Call to Action within the first 500px so readers can take an action without needing to scroll too much
- Test different Call to Actions: placement, size, wording, design, etc. and see how your readers respond

Do not describe the action it takes to achieve something, instead describe what you achieve by clicking. Consider these 2 examples:

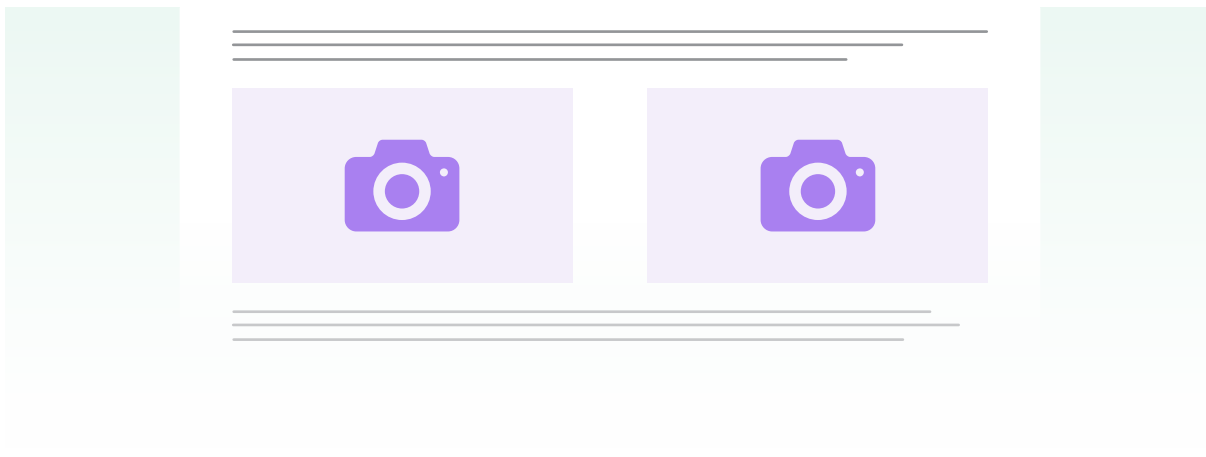


Read the PDF



Download

If we can avoid downloading anything we will. It's an unnecessary action. But we would, most likely, want to read a PDF. So there is more incentive to click on the first button.



## Background images

We are often told that we cannot use background images because certain clients do not support them. While this is true, there is a workaround. Background images can be a visually pleasing element in your email that can be used for image tile backgrounds or full images with text displayed on top.

While there are issues that can arise from the use of background images, they differ from layout to layout, as do the solutions. Talk to us at Agillic about your ideas and we can find a suitable solution together.

AaBbCc

## Custom fonts

Using fonts in emails has always been limited due to the few standard web fonts, like Arial, Times New Roman, Verdana etc. Now you can use your own fonts, provided that you have them in the woff2 format. The font has to be located on your own or our servers before they can be used. Alternatively, you can use Google's open library of fonts (<https://www.google.com/fonts>).

You also need consider a fallback font for the email clients that do not supporting Google fonts. Outlook specifically does not support a number of email features, and Google fonts is no exception. No problem though, the fallback takes care of that.

Tool tip

# Alternative texts

Alternative text, also known as the tooltip in the Agillic Customer Marketing Platform, is a powerful tool to engage your recipients before images are shown in their clients. You find it by clicking an image in the content manager. The only client out there displaying images by default is Gmail. Therefore, it is safe to say that many people are presented with an email with no images.

To make this experience better, you can style the alternative texts in a creative way. Imagine your logo. You probably have a company name, but it is unrecognisable before images are shown. Enter alternative text (Tooltips). Write your company name as the alternative text and style it to look like your logo. You are limited to font- families, font colour and font size for now, but that can be enough to present your brand the right way.

We're sorry to see you go! But if you want to unsubscribe, click here:

Unsubscribe

## Opt in / opt out

While the goal is to keep engaged subscribers, the option to unsubscribe, however, is important.

The thing about unsubscribing is that it is part of the relationship between you and your readers. It's not only required, but you also want to tell your recipients that they can stop interaction whenever they choose. It's like in a store, you wouldn't invite people in for a sale and then lock the doors.

Rule of thumb for unsubscription:

- Make the link easy to find. Do not hide it in large chunks of legal text.
- Use terms that people know, like unsubscribe or opt-out.
- Make a page where readers can easily manage their preferences and personal details. This is easily achievable through the Agillic Customer Marketing Platform questionnaires and landing pages.
- When recipients unsubscribe, confirm that they have unsubscribed from your emails. Represent your brand and follow them out with a page that thanks them.



# Spam

There is a lot to be said about how to avoid ending up in the spam folder. The best practices on the server side of things are already taken care of by Agillic.

Below is a checklist of things that you can take into account:

- Keep in touch with your audience regularly - too many bounces is a sign of outdated data
- Never use deceptive headers, from names, reply-to address or subject lines
- Never purchase lists with email addresses - those have a high rating in spam abuse reports and that is something you definitely do not want
- Always provide a valid unsubscribe link
- Always include your physical mailing address
- Don't talk about lots of money or money back guarantees, some sort of breakthrough, or a mortgage pitch
- Avoid excessive use of using exclamation marks
- Don't use all caps (Especially in the subject and preheaders)
- Don't use brightly coloured fonts
- Don't use many images with little to no text
- Don't use the word 'test' in the subject
- Do not send to inactive or stale subscribers (permissions generally go stale within 6 months)
  - subscriber engagement is a huge part of getting to the inbox and low activity makes the ISPs bulk the campaigns to the spam folder and block the domain and IP

# Grow your skills further

Email as a medium is constantly evolving and by leveraging technologies such as AI the impact of your communication can multiply. Stay updated and relevant by tapping into communities such as Litmus Community. And if you are an Agillic-user there is more to learn in Agillic's Knowledge Base. We encourage you to explore, experiment and play. That is how you grow :-)

The Agillic logo is displayed in white text on a red background. The word "agillic" is written in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The background of the entire page features a wavy, organic shape in shades of red and orange that flows from the bottom left towards the right.

Agillic is a Nordic software company enabling marketers to maximise the use of data and translate it into relevant and personalised communication, establishing strong relations between people and brands. Our customer marketing platform uses AI to enhance the business value of customer communication. By combining data-driven customer insights with the ability to execute personalised communication, we provide our clients with a head start in the battle of winning markets and customers.