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## further reading

Tim Berners-Lee's Answers for Young People is a brief outline of how he invented the World Wide Web:

[www.w3.org/People/Berners-Lee/Kids](http://www.w3.org/People/Berners-Lee/Kids).

His book *Weaving the Web: The Original Design and Ultimate Destiny of the World Wide Web* covers this in far more depth.

[sethgodin.typepad.com](http://sethgodin.typepad.com)

– the blog from Seth Godin, best-selling author, entrepreneur and agent of change.

## 2. email marketing

**What's inside:** An **introduction** to email marketing, and a brief **history** of email, which predates the World Wide Web. Get started with **key terms and concepts** and then learn how it works with the difference between promotions and newsletters. Learn the **9 steps to executing an email campaign**, as well as the parts of an email. Get started with some basic **tools of the trade**, the **pros and cons** of email marketing, and a **chapter summary** and a look at **how it all fits together**.

# introduction

At its core, email marketing is a tool for customer relationship management (CRM). Used effectively, this extension of permission based marketing can deliver one of the highest returns on investment (ROI) of any eMarketing activity.

Simply put, email marketing is a form of direct marketing which utilises electronic means to deliver commercial messages to an audience. It is one of the oldest and yet still one of the most powerful of all eMarketing tactics. The power comes from the fact that it is:

- Extremely cost effective due to a low cost per contact
- Highly targeted
- Customisable on a mass scale
- Completely measurable

Furthermore, email marketing's main strength is that it takes advantage of a customer's most prolific touch point with the Internet... their inbox.

Email marketing is a tool for building relationships with both existing and potential customers. It should maximise the retention and value of these customers, which should ultimately lead to greater profitability.

## history

Email is probably ubiquitous to you, but there was a time when there was no email!

Email actually predates the Internet, and was first used as a way for users of the same computer to leave messages for each other all the way back in 1961. Ray Tomlinson is credited with creating the first network email application in 1971. He initiated the use of the @ sign and the address structure that we use today (username@hostname) (Crocker). Email was used to send messages to computers on the same network, and is still used for this purpose today.

It was only in 1993 that large network service providers, such as America Online and Delphi, started to connect their proprietary email systems to the Internet. This began the large scale adoption of Internet email as a global standard. Coupled with standards that had been created in the preceding twenty years, the Internet allowed users on different networks to send each other messages.

The first email spam dates back to 1978. Spam is defined as unsolicited commercial or bulk email, and today is said to account for 80 to 85% of all email (Waters, 2008)!

Direct marketing has long played an integral part in marketing campaigns, but the high cost meant that only large companies were able to pursue this. However, with the growth of the Internet, and the use of email to market directly to consumers, marketers have found these costs dropping, and the effectiveness increasing.

## key terms and concepts

**B2B** Stands for Business to Business. When businesses sell products/services to other businesses and not to consumers.

**B2C** Stands for Business to consumers. When businesses sell products/services to consumers.

**Call to action** A CTA is a phrase written to motivate the reader to take action. (sign up for our newsletter, book car hire today etc.).

**CAN-SPAM** The U.S. law that regulates commercial email. It stands for "Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act of 2003."

**CRM** Customer Relationship Management.

**Database** In email marketing, the database is the list of prospects to whom emails are sent. It also contains additional information pertinent to the prospects.

**DNS (Domain Name System)** DNS converts a domain name into an IP address.

**DomainKeys** An email authentication system designed to verify the DNS domain of an email sender and the message integrity.

**Double opt-in** The act of getting subscribers to confirm their initial subscription via a follow up email asking them to validate their address and hence opt-in again.

**Hard bounce** The failed delivery of email communication due to an undeviating reason like a non-existent address.

**House list** An email database that a company generates itself without purchasing or renting names.

**HTML** HyperText Markup Language. HTML emails usually contain graphics and can be interactive.

**IP Address** The Internet Protocol (IP) address is a exclusive number, which is used to represent every single computer in a network.

**ISP** Internet Service Provider – this is the company that is providing you with access to the Internet e.g. MWEB, AOL, Yahoo! etc).

**Open rate** The percent of emails determined as opened out of the total number of emails sent.

**Opt-in** Give permission for emails to be sent to you.

**Opt-out** Also known as unsubscribe – The act of removing oneself from a list or lists so that specified information is no longer received via email.

**Sender ID** A method used by major ISPs to confirm that emails do originate from the domain from which it claims to have been sent.

**SMTP** Simple Mail Transfer Protocol is a protocol for sending messages from one server to another.

**Soft bounce** The failed delivery of an email due to a deviating reason like an overloaded mail box or a server failure.

**Spam** Email sent to someone who has not requested to receive it - EVIL!

**SPF** Sender policy framework is an extension of SMTP that stops email spammers from forging the "From" fields in an email.

**Text** Text emails or plain text emails do not contain graphics or any kind of markup.

**Unique forwarders** This refers to the number of individuals who forwarded a specific email on.

**White list** A list of accepted email addresses that an ISP, a subscriber or other email service provider allows to deliver messages regardless of spam filter settings.

## how it works

If you consider marketing as communicating with current and potential customers, you will see that every email that is sent from your organisation should be considered as part of your email marketing plan.

Does that sound a little complicated? Consider an online retailer, [www.zappos.com](http://www.zappos.com). Zappos is an online shoe retailer. What are the ways that, as a customer, you might receive emails from Zappos?

1. Transaction emails: when you place an order, there will be a number of emails that you receive, from confirmation of your order, to notice of shipping. Should you need to return an item, you will no doubt communicate with Zappos via email.
2. Newsletters: these are emails which are sent to provide information and keep customers informed. They do not necessarily carry an overt promotion, but instead ensure that a customer is in regular contact with the brand.
3. Promotion emails: should Zappos have a summer sale, they will send an email relating directly to that promotion.

There are other emails sent by Zappos, for example:

1. Emails to suppliers
2. Communication with affiliates

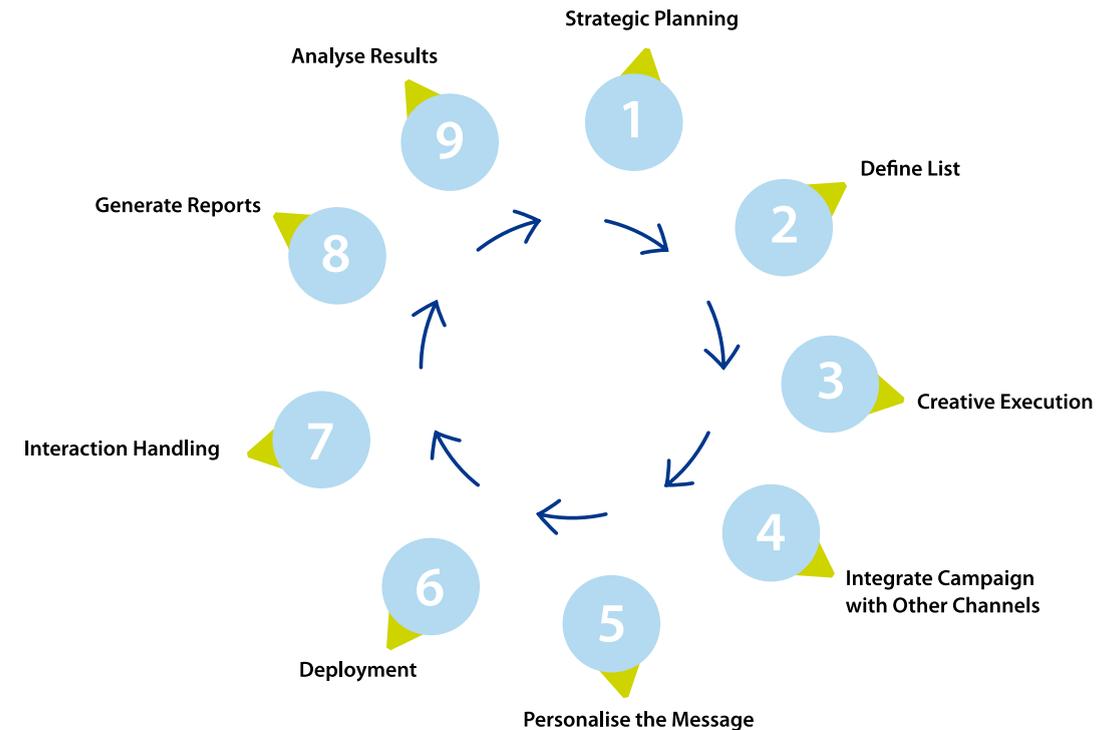
All of the communication sent out can be used to convey your marketing message. Every touchpoint will market the organisation. However, here we will focus on commercial emails.

**There are two types of commercial emails:**

**Promotional emails:** these are more direct and are geared at enticing the user to take an immediate action.

**Retention based emails:** also referred to as **newsletters**, these may include promotional messages but should be focussed on providing information of value to the user, geared at building a long term relationship with the user.

As with all eMarketing activities, careful planning is called for, as is careful testing and evaluating, so as to optimise your revenue. Email marketing may be highly cost effective, but the cost of getting it wrong can be very high indeed.



### 9 steps to executing an email campaign

## 9 steps to executing an email campaign

### 1. strategic planning

The first part of any email campaign should involve planning around the goals you will need to achieve. These will probably be in line with the goals of your web site, with email marketing being used as a tool to help you achieve those goals.

As discussed in the chapter on analytics and conversion optimisation, you will decide on the key performance indicators (KPIs) for your campaign as well.

Promotional emails will usually have an immediate goal:

- Users make a purchase
- Users download a whitepaper
- Users request further information

Newsletters tend to focus on longer term goals, and so your KPIs become more important here.

**note**

ROI can be a goal of the campaign, and it can be used as a KPI.

KPIs include:

- Open rate
- Click-through rate
- Number of emails forwarded
- ROI

A successful email campaign is most likely to be the one geared at retaining and creating a long term relationship with the reader.

Know your audience! They will dictate the interactions.

**2. define list**

Running a successful email campaign requires that a business has a genuine opt-in database. This database, the list of subscribers who have agreed to allow a company to send them emails with marketing messages, is the most valuable asset of an email campaign.

Permission must be explicitly given by all people to whom emails are sent. Companies that abuse this can put their reputation in jeopardy, and in some countries, legal action can be taken against companies that send unsolicited bulk email – spam.

Growing this database, while keeping it targeted, is a key factor in any email campaign.

The database needs only have one entry – the prospect’s email – but the following should also be considered:

- First name, surname and title
- Date permission granted
- Source of permission
- Gender
- Country
- Telephone number
- Date of birth

Fields such as name, surname and title should be separated in your database. You should also gather date of birth as opposed to a prospect’s age – it ensures your database can stay up to date!

**note**

Pepper and Rogers refer to gathering information over a period of time as “drip irrigation”, since it never overwhelms nor parches the prospect.

However, don’t be tempted to ask for more information than is required. The more information a marketer can gather, the better she can customise her marketing messages. However, the more information a prospect is required to give, the less likely he is to sign up. Further information can be requested over a period of time.

There are a myriad of ways to attract prospects to opt in to a database. Key is an email sign-up form on a company web site. Visitors to a web site have already expressed an interest in a company by clicking through to the web site – this is an opportunity to develop that interest further.

Sign-up forms best practice:

- Put the sign-up form where it can be seen – above the fold and on every page.
- State your anti-spam stance explicitly, and be clear about how you value subscribers’ privacy.
- Use a clear call to action.
- Tell subscribers what they will get, and how often they will get it. Include a benefit statement.
- Ensure the email address is correct by checking the syntax.
- Test to see what works best!

Every interaction can be used to ask permission to send emails.

1. Offer something valuable for free, and ask if they would sign up to your newsletter at the same time (e.g. white paper, gift voucher, music track).
2. Add a subscribe box to the checkout process of your retail site.
3. Use interactions at trade shows to ask for email addresses.

**3. creative execution**

Emails can be created and viewed as HTML or as text emails. Bear in mind, though, that sometimes HTML emails are rendered as text emails.

Text emails are the plain ones – text only, as the name suggests. If you have a Windows computer, and you open up notepad and type there, you will be creating a text file. These emails are smaller, and plainer. As these are text only, the copy really counts here.

HTML emails are the emails with all the bells and whistles. These emails can contain images, different fonts and hyperlinks. It’s probably what you’ve had in mind throughout this chapter when we have referred to email marketing.

**parts of an email header**

This has the “to”, “from” and “reply to” fields. These are also opportunities to build a relationship through creating a perception of familiarity. In other words, the reader needs to perceive that the newsletter is somewhat unique for them and sent personally by the publisher. Using a personalised company email address (e.g. trevor@companyname.com) for the “reply” field creates familiarity and builds trust with the reader. The “from” address should also include the organisation’s name. A meaningless “from” address which the reader cannot identify only serves to confuse the origin of the newsletter.

**note**

Opt-in and double opt-in: the integrity of the database can be safeguarded with a double opt in process. An email is sent to the email address supplied, and the user has to click on a link within that email to confirm their subscription. This means that dud email addresses are kept out of the database, and confirms that the user has granted explicit permission.

### subject line

The subject line could be the most important part of an email! Subject lines aid the reader in identifying the email, and also entice the reader to open it. The subject line is also scrutinised by spam filters, and so should avoid words like “free”, “win” and “buy now”. Consistent subject lines, using the name of the company and the newsletter edition, can build familiarity and help readers to sort their inbox. As with everything online, testing different subject lines will lead marketers to the formula that works for them.

### personalised greeting

With a database that has entries for readers’ names, it is possible to personalise the greeting of the email. “Hi Kim Morgan” can elicit far better responses than “Dear Valued Customer”, but it is possible to create a greeting with personality without personalising it. Occasionally, the subject line can be personalised as well to boost responses.

### body

This is where the content of the email goes. Don’t be tempted to use too many images: it can increase the size of the email, and it can obscure text when images do not load. Be sure that text is not on the image, but rather can be read without an image being loaded.

### footer

A standard footer for emails helps to build consistency, and is the customary place to keep the contact details of the company sending the email. At the very least, this should include the name and contact email of the company. It can also include the privacy policy of the sender. One way to grow the email list is add a “forward to a friend” link in the footer. The most important part of the footer is a clear unsubscribe link.

### unsubscribe link

It is mandatory to have an unsubscribe link on all commercial emails.

Interactive emails are best constructed with lightweight HTML capability allowing the email to open quickly. This helps to capture the user’s attention before he/she moves on. The structure must allow readers to scan and navigate the email easily. The length of paragraphs, emphasis through bolding and colours as well as sectioning information with bullets and borders all contribute to a well-structured email.

### create content

Email content that is relevant and something that readers will value, is vital to ensuring the success of an email marketing campaign. Valuable content is informative and should address the problems and needs of readers. It is important to realise that the reader determines the value of the content, not the publisher.



HTML email with mentioned elements shown

Successful email campaigns provide value to their readers. This value can vary from campaign to campaign. Newsletters can offer:

- Humour
- Research
- Information
- Promotions

However, avoid being marked as spam by staying away from words like “free”, “buy now” and “discount”.

### test for display and deliverability

The email should be scored to see that it will pass spam filters, and the design should be tested to ensure that it renders clearly in as many clients as possible. Make sure that images line up, that copy is clear and that all the links work.

Emails can be tested for platform compatibility at [www.sitevista.com/email.asp](http://www.sitevista.com/email.asp).

An email's spam score can be checked at [spamassassin.apache.org](http://spamassassin.apache.org).

### 4. integrate campaign with other channels

Whilst email marketing can operate as a stand alone marketing campaign, integrating it with other channels, both online and offline, will serve to both reinforce a brand's message and increase responses.

There should never be a disparity between the content, tone or design of an email when compared to the rest of a company's offerings. In-store promotions can be reinforced and promoted to an email database, or web site information can be summarised for email.

Custom landing pages, as required, should be created for any promotions being communicated in an email communication.

### 5. personalise the message

The technology of email marketing allows for mass customisation – it is one to one marketing on a macro scale. Even simple personalisation can see improved results.

Customisation starts at using the recipient's name and sending either HTML or text emails based on preference, to sophisticated measurement of a recipient's preferences and tailoring content to suit them.

Segmenting a database can allow for customisation across demographics or purchase history. Being able to reconcile browsing activity to an email recipient can give further opportunities for customisation.

#### note

An email client is the software or programme that a person uses to access their email. Some of these are web-based, like GoogleMail and Hotmail, and there are also plenty of software clients. As well as many versions of Outlook, there is also Thunderbird, Eudora, Lotus to mention just a few. And yes, your email could look different on each one of those.

### 6. deployment

By creating valuable content, establishing the correct frequency, and testing an email for display and deliverability, an email marketer should be able to ensure an excellent delivery rate. Consistency in deploying newsletters also aids in fostering trust and fulfilling expectation. Emails should be delivered at consistent times, but the best time for best results should be tested.

**Email reputation**, which can determine whether or not your message is regarded as spam, is the general opinion of the ISPs, the anti-spam community, and then subscribers towards a sender's IP address, sending domain, or both. This opinion is a reputation score created by an ISP or a third party provider. If the sender's score falls within the ISP's thresholds, a sender's messages will be delivered to the inbox. If not, the sender's emails may arrive in the bulk folder, be quarantined, or be bounced back to the sender.

Becoming an effective email marketer requires constant list cleansing and hygiene. In fact, most lists shrink by 30% each year due to subscribers changing email addresses. Make sure you are diligent about maintaining a current opt-in list to achieve maximum deliverability via reputation.

Tips to help reputation score:

- ISPs offer various sender's authentication standards such as Sender ID, SPF, and DomainKeys. Use these.
- Out with the old, in with the new – keep your database clean.
- Remove hard bounces after 3 deliveries (ISPs don't like e-mail broadcasters who have a high bounce rate).
- Remember that a huge but inaccurate and outdated database is far less use to an email marketer than a tightly-maintained, smaller database. Strive to boost your database, but don't forget to clean behind you as you go.
- Ensure email broadcast rates are not too high.
- Respond to complaints and unsubscribe requests – if someone requests to be unsubscribed, do so.
- Educate users about white lists.

#### When to send mails:

Common sense tells you not on Monday morning or Friday afternoon, but it varies by audience. Testing will guide you.

If the recipient has given permission to be sent marketing messages by email, then it is not spam. Users give permission when they tick a box that says “Yes, please send me offers from your company by email.” The email address can only be provided to another company if the user ticks a box that says “Yes, please send me offers from third parties selected by you by email.”

#### note

An email white list is a list of contacts that the user deems are acceptable to receive email from and should not be sent to the trash folder

#### note

When is email an email, and when is it spam? Spam is unsolicited bulk email – it means that the recipient never gave permission to be sent that email.

Permission must be explicitly given to the company to be allowed to market to that user. Trying to gain explicit permission in a sneaky way will only annoy your users, and might result in your emails being marked as spam.

## 7. interaction handling

As well as the emails strategically planned as part of a campaign (promotional emails and newsletters) every interaction via email should be considered as part of a company's email marketing practice.

Automated emails such as order confirmations and even out of office replies are all opportunities to engage with customers. If a company has a particular tone or content style, this can be reinforced in these interactions.

These emails can also be an opportunity to cross-advertise other promotions that a company is offering.

## 8. generate reports

As with all things eMarketing, tracking, analysing and optimising is key to growth. Email tracking systems produce statistics in a user-friendly manner.

Key measurables for understanding of the performance of email campaigns:

- Number of **emails delivered**.
- Number of **bounces** (and this should be separated into hard bounces and soft bounces).
- Number of unique **emails opened**: an email can be delivered, but not opened.
- **Unsubscribes**: significant or consistent loss in subscribers is a key indication that you are not meeting the needs of your subscribers
- **Pass on rate**: high pass on rate (forwards) indicates that your list values the content enough to constantly share with others. Putting an easy "forward to a friend" link in every email can increase this. Adding a sign-up link to forwarded emails will organically grow the opt-in list.
- **Click-through rates and conversion**: This measures the effectiveness of an email via the links placed in the content. When a reader clicks through to a web page, these can be easily measured as a percentage against number of delivered, opened or sent emails. It reveals which content or promotion was the most enticing for the reader.

## 9. analyse results

Once the reports have been generated, it is time to work out what the numbers are revealing, and to use this information to improve the next email sent out.

With email marketing, split testing across a host of factors will enable campaign optimisation. Some factors to test include:

- Open rates across different subject lines and delivery times

- Optimal number of links in an email for click through rates and conversions
- Different copy styles and copy length
- The effect of video on delivery rates, open rates and conversions

## tools of the trade

First up, an email campaign needs a database. A plan for growing this database needs to be put in place. Most email service providers will also provide tools for managing this database.

All emails need to be tested for email client compatibility as well as for any potential spam problems.

Email client compatibility can be reviewed at:

[www.litmusapp.com](http://www.litmusapp.com)

An email's spam score can be checked at:

[spamassassin.apache.org](http://spamassassin.apache.org)

Once an email has been sent, results need to be analysed to pinpoint areas for growth for the next campaign.

## pros and cons

Permission based email marketing can give the highest return on investment of any marketing activities. Technology allows mass customisation, allowing personalisation across a large list of subscribers.

When used to foster relationships with a customer base, email marketing can go a long way to increasing the lifetime value of that customer.

Email marketing is highly measurable, and databases are highly segmentable.

However, with the increasing numbers of companies and individuals using email marketing, many consumers are email fatigued. It requires ingenuity, focus and dedication to maintain an email database and consistently deliver useful quality emails that will be read.

It does not take much for email to be marked as spam, and it can be difficult to recover from being branded as a spammer by the ISPs.

### discussion

Open rate does not necessarily indicate whether or not an email has been read. How do you think a marketer can determine if emails are being read?

## summary

Email marketing is a form of direct marketing that can render the best ROI of any eMarketing tactic. It is:

- Highly targeted and customisable
- Cost effective

Gaining explicit permission to send email marketing to a person is a prerequisite for successful email marketing, however all emails sent by an organisation and the individuals in that organisation can be seen as marketing opportunities.

Successful email marketing requires careful planning and testing. HTML emails need to be tested across a range of email clients, and should be tested for a spam score, before being deployed.

All email sent to a list of subscribers needs to provide an easy and accessible unsubscribe link in the email.

### case study: Johnnie Walker

Johnnie Walker South Africa was looking to increase a specific segment of consumers on its email database. The proposed target group was mainly comprised of South African black male consumers, 18 – 30 years of age with disposable income. The use of viral email campaign/ refer a friend style tactic was chosen as the necessary medium. Although an email campaign is a well used tactic within viral marketing, agency teams and client felt confident due to the beginner to intermediate user level of the list. Connectivity is an issue in South Africa and most on the database would not have been heavily exposed to these types of campaigns.

The creative approach was primarily to appeal to the target market's connectivity by finding something which would fit into their social value system. Research of the group told us that they were highly social but also aspired towards older, affluent males of the same culture who had made a success of their lives in the new South Africa. This older affluent group was also regarded as Johnnie Walker Black drinkers.

The central idea of "State a case for yourself" was proposed in order to invite the target market to assess if they are worthy of being part of the Johnnie Walker Striding Man Society. The prize was in itself a "case" (12 bottles) of Johnnie Walker Black which further reinforced the concept of "State a case for yourself". Send to a friend technology was used so that prospects could state a case for themselves by nominating five friends worthy of the Striding Man Society. Pages specific to the campaign were created for click-throughs and data capturing.

The email was sent to a list of carefully chosen members of the Johnnie Walker Black / Striding Man Society database who fit the required profile. Reminder emails were configured to go out one week after the first email.

**STATE YOUR CASE...  
AND YOU COULD WIN A CASE OF  
JOHNNIE WALKER BLACK LABEL!**

Hi {<firstname>}

Like our "Keep Walking" mantra personified by Johnnie Walker himself, we at the Striding Man Society subscribe to the belief that it's not only what you know, but also who you know that counts. In fact, the Striding Man Society provides the perfect opportunity to network with other likeminded members who, like yourself, have been chosen for their exceptional class and character.

Knowing this, we're sure you yourself know plenty of driven, successful individuals, intent on personal growth and with the ambition to Keep Walking, no matter what, who would be excellent candidates for the Striding Man Society. State your case by recommending five suitable candidates and you stand a chance to win a case of your own: containing nothing less than twelve bottles of Johnnie Walker Black Label.

Closing date: 17 August 2006

**STATE YOUR CASE:**

[Click Here](#) to name your five potential Johnnie Walker Striding Man Society candidates and to enter the draw.

**KEEP WALKING**  
JOHNNIE WALKER

NOT FOR SALE TO PERSONS UNDER THE AGE OF 18 YEARS | Unsubscribe | Terms & Conditions

No other form of marketing was used and there weren't any links to the Johnnie Walker web site or any other web sites. No search engine marketing, banner ads or offline media were used to promote this campaign. Its success was purely driven by people forwarding the email to others.

The email campaign was very successful - 2630 new subscriptions were captured within the first week! Over 25 000 emails were sent to unique addresses in the duration of the campaign, and it saw over 200% growth in subscribers to Johnnie Walkers' Striding Man Society. The campaign achieved a conversion rate of about 29% - 29% of prospects who received the viral email from the original list of subscribers, submitted their details, and agreed to become part of Johnnie Walkers' Striding Man Society. Reminder emails added a 10% increase in unique click through activity against the viral email.

## case study questions

1. Why was email an ideal medium to reach this target market?
2. Why does a brand like Johnny Walker collect email addresses?
3. How important was personalisation in this campaign?

## chapter questions

1. What is meant by “mass customisation” and why is this so beneficial?
2. What are the key differences between direct marketing by email and direct marketing by post?
3. Why is it important for permission to be gained before marketing by email to a prospect?
4. Emails that are expected and recognised are more likely to be read. How can a marketer use this knowledge to increase the readership of emails?

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## further reading

[www.marketingsherpa.com](http://www.marketingsherpa.com)

– MarketingSherpa provides regular case studies, charts and how tos. Essential reading for any eMarketer.

[www.email-marketing-reports.com/blogs.htm](http://www.email-marketing-reports.com/blogs.htm)

– this one-stop resource provides guidelines, regular articles and links to other excellent blogs in the email marketing industry.

[www.campaignmonitor.com/blog/](http://www.campaignmonitor.com/blog/)

– this blog from Campaign Monitor, a leading email newsletter software provider, keeps abreast of industry trends and best practices.

[www.email-standards.org](http://www.email-standards.org)

– the Email Standards project is aimed ensuring that emails can be rendered correctly across all clients. It also regularly tests how email clients are performing on compatibility.