



University Marketing and Promotions

5 Tips for Email Marketing Your Best College Student Prospects

By Andrew Marino



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Are you seeking to connect with college students and promote your products or services through email marketing? Successfully targeting this demographic requires a combination of time-tested methods and contemporary approaches. In this guide, we'll dissect these strategies and provide you with five effective tactics to boost your email campaign's response rate.

1. Precisely Identify Your Ideal Email Recipients

The effectiveness of your email message hinges on the relevance of your audience. Therefore, it's crucial to select the right email list. If you maintain an in-house email database, ensure that you segment and target your recipients appropriately. For instance, if you're extending a discount exclusively to lapsed subscribers as part of a win-back initiative, take care not to inadvertently send it to current subscribers who might feel excluded. Employ proper flags within your in-house database. Many email deployment platforms, such as Constant Contact, Send in Blue, or Drip, offer robust list segmentation capabilities.

Pro tip: Regularly maintain the cleanliness and accuracy of your in-house email database. Performing routine data hygiene checks is essential to prevent sending messages to prospects and clients with invalid email addresses.

If you opt for a third-party list provider to distribute your message, ensure that they can furnish select fields suited to your offer. Request sample campaigns, case studies, or historical performance data from your third-party list provider to assess their expertise in reaching your target audience.

Pro tip: Many third-party email deployment providers possess comprehensive email deployment platforms. Some may even assist you in sending your in-house email list. This could be an advantageous option, particularly if you've encountered challenges with self-sending through platforms like Constant Contact, Send in Blue, Drip, or Hubspot.

2. Craft Engaging Preview Text

While the subject line often takes center stage in email design, the preview text is an often overlooked element of email marketing. Preview text typically consists

of a single sentence that appears in an inbox, offering recipients a glimpse of the email's content without requiring them to open it.

This presents a critical opportunity to entice your audience to engage with your message more deeply. Here are some effective tactics for well-crafted preview text:

1) **Create a Sense of Urgency:** Infuse a feeling of immediacy to encourage recipients to open your email. Consider treating subject lines and preview text as part of a cohesive message. For instance, a subject line like "Sale Starts Now" followed by preview text that reads "Hurry! Offer Ends in 24 hours" can work together to convey a sense of urgency.

2) **Foster a Sense of Exclusivity:** Tap into your recipients' desire to be part of an exclusive club by offering content solely for them, not the general public. Start with a subject line that suggests an offer is "just for you," followed by preview text inviting them to "claim your reserved spot inside."

3) **Provide Concise Information:** Sometimes, a straightforward summary of the email's content in a single sentence serves as an effective pre-header. This approach can be particularly successful depending on your product, offer, and target audience.

3. Keep Your Messages Concise

The adage "brevity is the essence of wit" holds true in email copywriting. Today's audiences, especially younger demographics, are inundated with messages and can easily disengage. To ensure your message resonates quickly and effectively, avoid excessive verbiage and lengthy scrolls.

(It's worth noting that this principle also applies when posing survey questions via links, a topic we won't delve into here. However, it's essential to recognize that there's an inverse relationship between the time recipients spend with your marketing material and their response rate. The more time you demand, the less likely you'll get the desired response.)

While including all pertinent information is important, consider incorporating ample graphics and white space to keep your message contained within a single screen, whether viewed on a mobile device or desktop. Trim your copy and offer to include only the most relevant and attention-grabbing content, eliminating any superfluous details that might burden your recipients' time.

4. Ensure Mobile Compatibility

Chances are, your college student audience will access your message on their mobile devices. In fact, studies reveal that this holds true across various demographics, with over 70% of people reading emails on mobile devices.

As a result, designing and composing your message with mobile users in mind is essential. Here are some fundamental mobile-friendly guidelines:

1. Utilize a single-column email template.
2. Feature a single, prominent Call to Action (CTA).
3. Avoid minuscule fonts that may impede readability.
4. Incorporate only essential imagery to streamline load times.

5. Continuously Test and Optimize Your Messages

Ultimately, the success of an email marketing campaign hinges on established benchmarks. How can you set these benchmarks? By implementing a regimen of testing, optimization, and frequent deployments.

Pro Tip: Avoid the notion of a “one and done” email marketing strategy, and maintain realistic expectations. We’ve encountered smaller clients who expected remarkable results from a single email campaign and cited impressive metrics from case studies as examples of what they anticipated. While this reflects a positive self-image and ambition, it’s essential to acknowledge that success in email marketing results from consistent testing, refinement, and iterative efforts.

Even the largest marketers, with whom we’ve collaborated, don’t achieve perfection on their initial attempts. Achieving success necessitates analyzing key metrics, such as open rates and click-through rates, which are commonly found in tracking reports. Deliberate ways to enhance these metrics in future deployments.

Testing methodologies can vary widely, from standard A/B tests, where two distinct email creatives are sent to a subset of the same audience simultaneously, to delivering a single version of the same creative to two different target segments concurrently. These tests can be executed over several weeks, numerous deployments, in combination with supplementary channels, or in isolation, offering numerous possibilities.

Selecting the appropriate testing approach should align with your objectives

and the insights you aim to gain. We recommend allocating substantial effort to strategize testing sessions, ensuring they match the dedication devoted to crafting your email message.

BONUS Tip #6: Enhance Your Email Marketing with SMS

It's no secret that today's college students devote more time to their mobile devices than their predecessors. To explore multi-channel marketing for this mobile-savvy demographic, consider incorporating SMS marketing. SMS entails sending a brief text message containing a concise message and a compact URL, increasing engagement by reaching your audience through multiple avenues. If you've already streamlined your message per tip #4, you might have an excellent opportunity to connect with your audience through SMS as well.

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Email marketing remains one of the most effective channels for reaching college student audiences. However, success depends on adopting the right strategies. You now possess five email marketing best practices tailored to college student prospects to bolster your email campaigns, along with a bonus tip on leveraging SMS marketing. Should you have any inquiries, remember that we at University Marketing and Promotions are here to assist you with all your email and SMS needs. Don't hesitate to reach out via email or phone. We're just an email or call away!

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About the Author

Andrew Marino specializes in mass email deployments utilizing a database of over 200 million email and postal records with more than 150 selects available. In his role he provides strategic insight, account management and oversees a team of professionals providing digital media services to a variety of clients across a broad spectrum of categories.

Andrew is the author of dozens of business articles, white papers and guest blog posts on email- and digital marketing. He's also spoken at a number of marketing industry conferences.

His new book, *101 Rules for Digital Marketing Your Small Business*, will be released later this year.