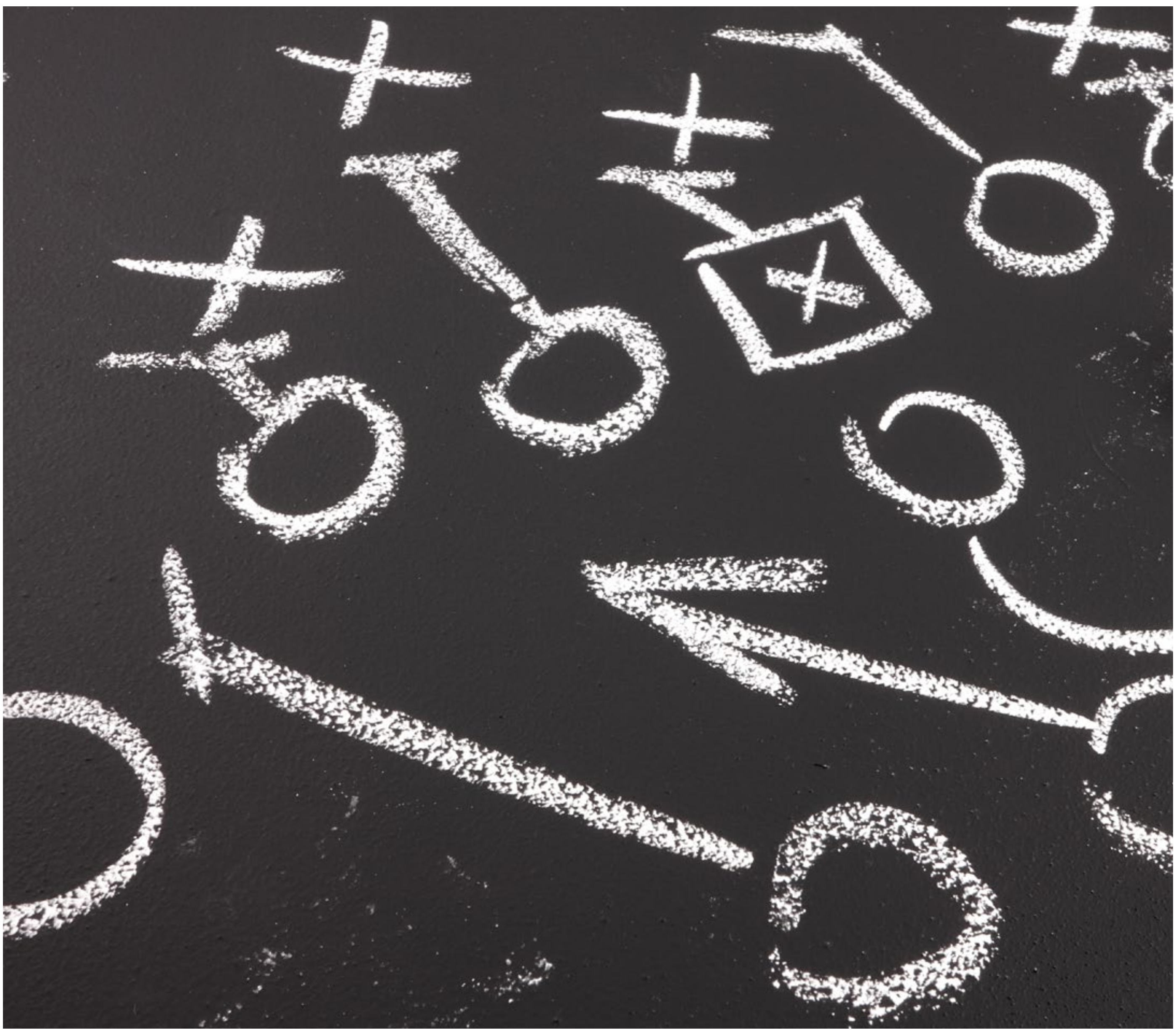
MARKETING SOLUTIONS

EMAIL REPORTING PLAYBOOK

Your Guide to Truly Actionable Email Analytics



IN THIS PAPER

INTRODUCTION

All too often, email reporting is little more than a pile of numbers in a spreadsheet. It gets pulled, looked at, and filed. And then marketers continue with their email program, as-is.

It's time to get more out of your investment. Email reporting should be a tool that gives you real insight into how impactful your email program is, what the trends are, and what the ROI is—ultimately spurring ideas or justification for making enhancements.

The following will provide you guidance for producing truly actionable email reporting. There are two primary ways in which you can improve your reporting:

1. Adjusting which key performance indicators (KPIs) you focus on

2. Identifying the right tools to review them

BASIC ENGAGEMENT KPIS

To describe how engaged subscribers are, most marketers pay closest attention to these metrics:

Open rate

The percentage of emails opened in an email marketing campaign.

Click-through rate

The percentage of recipients that click on a given URL in your email.

Unsubscribe (Opt-out) rate

The percentage of subscribers choosing not to receive email communications from the sender anymore, and requesting removal from your email list.

Spam complaint rate

The percentage of your email recipients who marked your emails as Spam.

List growth rate

This percentage is the net result of new subscribers minus the unsubscribes (including hard bounces) and email/spam complaints.

Email metrics like these are generally the easiest to pull since most email service providers (ESPs) have default reporting capabilities that encompass them.

Engagement KPIs, along with deliverability KPIs, are a good start in understanding the overall health of your email program. When working with basic email metrics, we recommend:

Have a good understanding of your past email performance.

Compare your KPIs week-over-week and month-over-month, as well as year-over-year. While the current snapshot of engagement metrics in isolation is somewhat helpful (e.g., "that's a good open rate" or "that's an average click rate"), it's not anywhere near as useful as understanding how your rates are compared to how they have been in the past. Year-over-year analysis is especially useful for industries that are more seasonal in nature.

Have a good understanding of the latest industry benchmarks for engagement and deliverability.

Email performance will vary quite a bit, based on whether you're targeting a B2B or B2C audience, the nature of your emails (promotional, transactional, triggered, etc.), and also your specific vertical. And knowing relatively where you stack up compared to your competitors is important. The Data & Marketing Association is a great resource for discovering industry benchmarks.

Go beyond default metrics and incorporate calculated or derived metrics where it makes sense.

For example, often open rate and click-through rate are known, but the click-to-open rate is not standard and must be derived. This is a very helpful metric for determining how compelling your email content is—aka, of the recipients who opened your email, here's how many clicked.

ADVANCED ROI & DATA AGGREGATION KPIS

According to Salesforce's "State of Marketing Leadership" report, there is a big disparity between what channel marketers and senior marketers value in reporting.

Channel marketers focus on engagement metrics, whereas senior marketers are concerned about the bottom line—conversions and ROI.

An important step in taking reporting to the next level is adding metrics such as:

Conversions

How well did the email convert? Similarly, how well did a campaign convert or each click convert?

Cost

What did it cost to produce and deploy the email? When cost is known, consider adding Cost per Open (Impression), Cost per Click, and Cost per Conversion.

Revenue

How much revenue is email bringing? Evaluate based on the program overall, a single email or campaign, and/or per subscriber.

Another way to get more out of your email reporting is to aggregate your data. Rather than looking at your email program and its performance as a whole, think about which logical segments to consider. Two common, useful ways to aggregate reporting data are:

"Often a single send should be considered in the context of a larger campaign—and sometimes, campaigns are part of even larger initiatives."

At the campaign level. By default, most ESPs report at the individual email-send level. This is useful, but for most marketers, it's not the whole story. Often a single send should be considered in the context of a larger campaign—and sometimes, campaigns are part of even larger initiatives. For example, certainly you want to understand how your "May 2017 Newsletter" send performed. But isn't it just as important, if not more important, to understand how all newsletters are performing?

At the customer segment level. As we all know, not all subscribers are created equally. For meaningful reporting, it may make sense to bucket your customers to understand how emails or campaigns are performing for certain segments. This may allow you to answer questions like:

- How is my newsletter performing for my most valuable customers?
- Are these the same customers who are always converting?
- Which emails earn the most conversions from customers who do not buy frequently?
- Which emails or campaigns perform best with new customers?
- For subscribers who are on the verge of defecting, what email offers are most effective to bring them back?

PREMIUM EMAIL REPORTING

Visualizations & Integration of Data Sources

If you're looking at engagement, deliverability, conversions/ROI, and data segments, you're already ahead of many email marketers.

Yet there is still another level of reporting insight to achieve, and this level is most often only able to be reached when an investment has been made in premium reporting software.

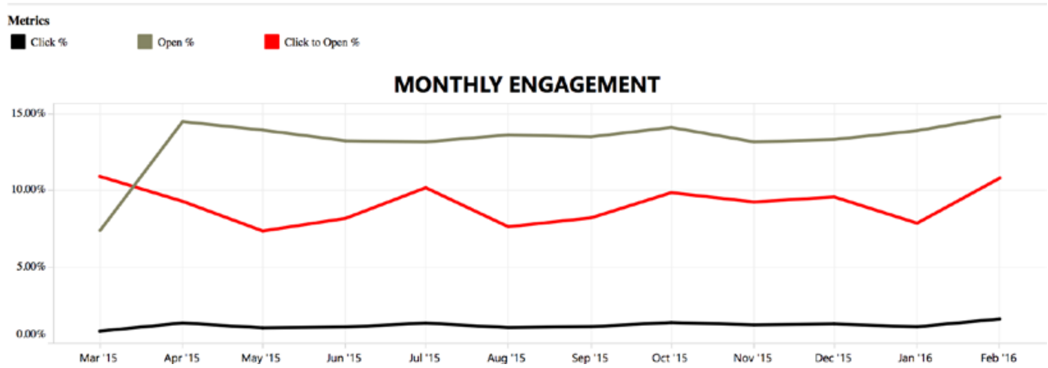
One level of insight is in the visualization of your data. It may sound simple, but visualization is an extremely powerful aspect of reporting that is often lacking in basic email tools. If your only visualizations are tables and basic charts with the inability to drill down or change dimensions on the fly, it may be that you have the data but aren't able to digest the data in a way that is meaningful.

Following are a few examples illustrating the usefulness of data visualization:

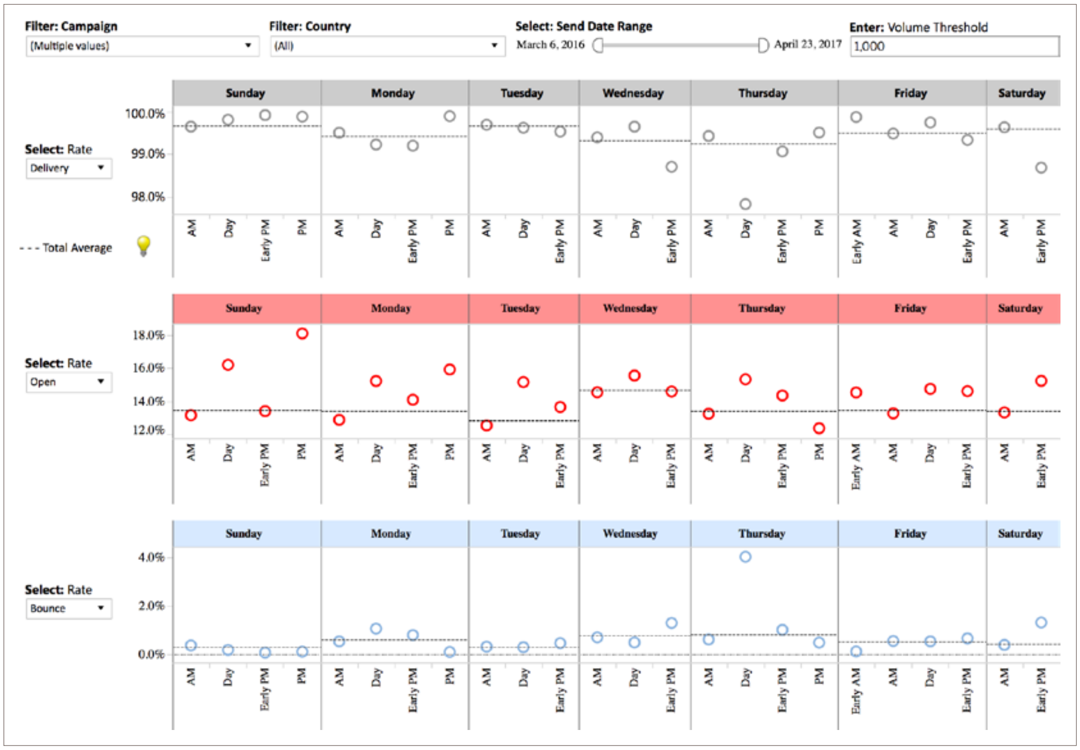
ENGAGEMENT

Filter: Campaign (Multiple values)
Filter: Country (All)
Select: Send Date Range March 6, 2016 – April 23, 2017

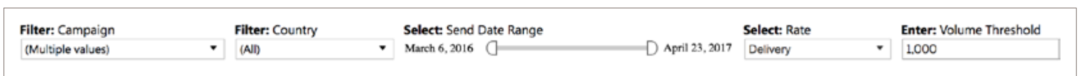
	Sends	Deliveries	Delivery %	Opens	Open %	Clicks	Click %	Click To Open %	Bounces	Bounce %	Unsubs	Unsub %
ABANDON CART	56,900	56,178	98.7%	41,958	39.4%	10,540	11.8%	30.3%	722	1.3%	33	0.1%
BROWSE ABANDON	7,787	7,774	99.8%	4,528	37.8%	719	6.7%	17.7%	13	0.2%	3	0.0%
PROMO	36,267,320	36,151,112	99.7%	6,367,033	13.4%	623,832	1.3%	9.6%	116,208	0.3%	7,932	0.0%



RATES BY WEEKDAY AND TIME SENT



DEPLOYMENT STRATEGY



Delivery Rate

	AVG	PROMO Early AM	AM	Day	Early PM	PM
Sunday	99.81%		99.63%	99.81%	99.92%	99.88%
Monday	99.37%		99.46%	98.94%	99.20%	99.89%
Tuesday	99.64%		99.68%	99.70%	99.53%	
Wednesday	99.17%		99.29%	99.51%	98.70%	
Thursday	98.47%		99.38%	95.99%	98.99%	99.51%
Friday	99.53%	99.87%	99.44%	99.46%	99.33%	
Saturday	99.15%		99.61%		98.69%	
AVG	99.31%	99.87%	99.50%	98.90%	99.19%	99.76%

Meaningful visuals or dashboards are particularly important for the C-suite. Unlike business analysts, executives usually don't have availability to closely investigate spreadsheets. They need the data that they care about to be represented in a meaningful way in order to come to conclusions and make decisions.

What's more, dashboards are most effective when they can be accessed with real-time data, and drilled down or manipulated on the fly.

The other way to take your email reporting to a premium level is by integrating multiple data sources. Typically, your ESP only collects KPIs on engagement and deliverability—and possibly conversions if you have the ESP configured to do so—but often this is leaving many missing pieces out of the puzzle.

To have the big picture of how your email program is performing, marketers should factor in data that typically lives outside the ESP, such as:

- Recency, Frequency, and Monetary data
- Offline conversions
- Customer lifetime value
- Propensity to buy
- Propensity to defect
- Web activity
- Engagement in social, SMS, apps, and other channels

Is all of this needed to determine how an email performed? Not necessarily, but it may be needed to really determine how effective that email was in the grand scheme of your marketing program.

How do you get there? That leads us to the second major way to take your email reporting to the next level...

"Executives need the data that they care about to be represented in a meaningful way in order to come to conclusions and make decisions."

EMAIL MARKETING TOOLS

There are three categories of tools that marketers can use to create and analyze email reporting.

1. Default ESP Reporting

All email platforms have some level of built-in reporting capabilities. Over the last decade, these capabilities have generally become more robust since this can be a key platform differentiator for many marketing decision makers.

All ESPs offer basic engagement and delivery reporting, both on individual sends and at some aggregate levels. Reports will typically be available on demand as well as able to be scheduled. Depending on the ESP, you may also have access to:

- Campaign-level reporting
- Opens and clicks by device (mobile vs. desktop or specific devices)
- Non-engagement reporting (filtering by “did not click” and “did not open”)
- Advanced deliverability reporting (details on inbox placement, complaints by ISP, etc.)

LEVERAGE THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY

From Salesforce Marketing Cloud to Adobe Campaign to Oracle Eloqua and Responsys, we possess over 300 certifications across a variety of systems. Our expertise is platform-agnostic.

Visit our Online Channels overview to learn more.

2. Premium Add-ons or Apps

Many ESPs now offer add-on reporting enhancements by way of software add-ons, apps, or integrations with partners. These can be very effective when reporting is lacking a few key components, yet a full-blown business intelligence tool would be underutilized.

For example, the Salesforce Marketing Cloud (SFMC) offers two notable reporting add-ons with unique benefits:

Discover is a premium reporting upgrade that gives SFMC users access to more robust reporting in these ways:

- The ability to create custom reports, save them, and schedule them
- Drag-and-drop capabilities for creating reports
- The ability to create custom measures. For example, perhaps you want to keep track of the rate of overall conversions compared to clicks. Conversions and clicks are measured by default, but conversions/clicks is not. With Discover, you can create this custom measure and use it in any report.
- Access to "send time attributes" that allow you to track performance based on time intervals. For example, you may determine easily what Send Day of the Week results in the best open rates.
- Custom visualizations—for each report, choose the visualization you prefer, from bar charts to line charts to scatter plots and more. You may also color-code cells within a chart based on specific thresholds (green = good, red = bad, etc.).

Inbox Tools is an advanced deliverability reporting and rendering testing suite of tools, powered by Return Path, a leader in email deliverability expertise. This integration is ideal for marketers who are especially concerned with or wish to monitor deliverability at a granular level. The deliverability reporting tools include:

- Reputation monitoring dashboards that give you information on your Sender Score—which directly affects your ability to get into the inbox—and the ability to research others' Sender Scores
- Detailed inbox placement measurements by campaign; available via Return Path seeding on sends that you choose
- Reporting on what devices are used to view your email; available to the specific device level
- Data on what time and day your emails are most often viewed

Visualization is an extremely powerful aspect of reporting that, when displayed in a meaningful way, makes the data easily digestible.

3. Business Intelligence (BI) Tools

ESP reporting functionality—particularly what's available through premium add-ons or integrations—is getting better and better, and in many cases, it may be sufficient for your organization. However, if you want to get a more holistic view of your marketing program, with email as one key part of it, a full business intelligence tool is recommended.

Software packages from Tableau are available in different configurations to meet your requirements. Some of the advantages to these kinds of tools include:

A flexible data architecture. These tools can typically accommodate many different data types and integrate with many different data sources.

The ability to create and share custom dashboards. These tools often allow users to select which data and what visualizations are most critical and roll them into custom dashboards. These dashboards can then be shared, either in a real-time fashion via web login or in a static fashion via file exports.

Interactive visualizations. Business intelligence tools offer the most options in terms of visualizations and typically these visualizations can be modified on the fly or drilled into.

EMAIL REPORTING, VISUALIZED

Through our partnership with Tableau, RRD Marketing Solutions offers a centralized, plug-and-play Email Performance Dashboard that provides the performance of an email and enables users to drill into various campaign details to determine the email quality.

- Campaign
- Package
- Audience
- Deployment date
- Open rate, click rate
- Bounce rate
- Unsubscribe rate
- Opens, clicks, opt-outs

To learn more about our email reporting tool, contact Jason Conley today: jason.b.conley@rrd.com

tableau PARTNER

NEXT STEPS

1. Make Your Business Case

In order to get the reporting you really need to make a difference, it may be that you need to make some investments in software, online tools, upgrades, and/or hours. This is where you may need to gain executive buy-in before proceeding.

How do you get that buy-in? One way might be to estimate the value of the testing that reporting allows you to do. The testing and the subsequent delivery of a proven marketing “winner” will certainly come with an ROI that you can estimate.

The more you understand about what’s working and what’s not, the more you can test. Those tests, when done the right way, will result in better engagement and better sales; in other words, tangible bottom line results.

2. Invest Where It Makes Sense

Do your homework on what tools are available and the pros and cons of each. For software you are considering, it’s important to think not just about what it does today, but what’s on the roadmap for the near future. And, use what tools you have available to evaluate your program, looking at your past performance as well as industry standards.

3. Outline Your Goals

Next, create some goals that are not only realistic but are also impactful for your business. Everyone wants to improve engagement metrics like opens and clicks, but engagement alone is typically not the end goal.

A more precise goal might be to add more meaningful content to emails over the next six months, which should results in an increase in click-to-open rates by at least 10%. A related goal, stemming from adding meaningful content and links, might be to improve conversions and/or email revenue by a certain percentage.

4. Automate Where You Can

Whether you are using basic or advanced reporting tools, there should be some level of automation available. Automating reports will not only save you time but will also ensure that reporting stays at top-of-mind. Look into your automation options and consider automating certain reports for the marketing personnel at the execution level as well as other reports for the executive level.

5. Evaluate, Hypothesize, Test

It’s important to not just review reporting, but to act on it. Look for trends and outliers and bump these up against your send details: audience, content, subject line, time/day of send, etc. From here, you can make hypotheses about what approaches are most effective for your customers.

For example, you might see a spike in conversions around product-focused emails that are sent on Thursdays. This insight gives you the opportunity to test similar types of sends to boost overall conversions.

How do product-focused emails perform on each day of the week? How would other types of emails perform on Thursdays? What audience segment is responding best, and how do we send them even more content that they want? Some good hypotheses should dovetail right into your email test plan.

Ready to Move Your Email KPIs from Elementary to Actionable?

It’s time to talk to a leading customer engagement firm.

If your company’s email reporting efforts are limited and ineffectual at gaining you actionable insights, it might be time to reach out for some support (or maybe just a second opinion).

With over 300 certifications across a variety of systems, our expertise is platform-agnostic. Design, build, deploy, measure—we work within client systems to optimize current technology through improved functionality and system integrations.

Recognized by Forrester Research as a leader in “Analytics and Measurement,” we exhibit a proven framework for defining, enabling and deploying successful email marketing initiatives—no matter the marketing automation platform.

More About RRD Marketing Solutions

It's the age of the customer. More than ever before, consumers are at the heart of marketing strategies and messaging. They're informed and empowered, and they have high expectations for a personalized experience.

RRD Marketing Solutions helps brands optimize engagement with their customers across all touchpoints—online, offline and onsite. The group activates marketing resources in the most impactful way, through a combination of predictive insights, inspired content and meaningful interactions.

We build digital marketing programs with messaging that speaks directly to customers and relates to the purchase path. Our experts can provide guidance, supplement client teams, or manage campaigns from start to finish.

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