

## 18.5: Measuring success

As with all things digital marketing, tracking, analysing and optimising are key to growth and success. Most direct messaging tracking systems produce statistics in a user-friendly manner.

Key measurables for understanding the performance of direct marketing campaigns include:

- Number of emails or SMSs delivered (delivery rate).
- Number of bounces (this should be separated into hard bounces and soft bounces).
- Number of unique opens: a message can be delivered, but not opened.
- Unsubscribes: significant or consistent loss in subscribers is a key indication you are not meeting the needs of your subscribers.
- Pass-on rate: a high pass-on rate (forwards) indicates that your customers value the content enough to share it constantly with others. Adding a signup link to forwarded emails will organically grow the opt-in list.
- Clickthrough rates and conversion: These measure the effectiveness of a message 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 the number of delivered, opened or sent emails. It reveals which content or promotion was the most enticing for the reader.

Some metrics are more useful than others. A good example of this is the open rate. Emails are tracked using a tiny, transparent image that gets downloaded, but some email desktop clients block the downloading of images. If the tracking image doesn't load, the email won't register as opened. However, this can be factored in to some extent, and open rates give you an idea of how well your subject lines resonate.

What you should be interested in is what activity takes place based on a message. This means you'll need to track leads or actions. You can do this through link tagging, meaning appending tracking parameters to a URL in your newsletter or SMS. These parameters are then identified by the Google Analytics of your website, registering that the user has come to the site through your email or SMS. Google Analytics will then take the information in the tag and store it in a cookie, from which it can track the user's interactions with the site after they arrived at the landing page.

Here is a link to the Mobile Marketing Watch website as it may appear in a Mobile Marketing Watch email campaign:

[http://mobilemarketingwatch.com/urba...ns-69570/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+MobileMarketingWatch+%28Mobile+Marketing+Watch%29](http://mobilemarketingwatch.com/urba...ns-69570/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+MobileMarketingWatch+%28Mobile+Marketing+Watch%29)

The tracking parameters are:

?  
utm\_source=feedburner&utm\_medium=email&utm\_campaign=Feed%3A+MobileMarketingWatch+%28Mobile+Marketing+Watch%29

These can then be used to report on traffic from that message using Google Analytics.

Generic direct messaging benchmarks can be used as a guide to see how well your campaigns are performing, but the best way to monitor performance is to benchmark your own campaign. Smaller lists tend to have a higher open rate, but this is probably because they're more targeted. The overall average email open rate is 27.4%, though this varies by industry, while the average clickthrough rate is 4.5%. Overall rates are quite low because far too many ignorant or lazy email marketers bring down the average. It's best to look at the average open rate for your industry, rather than the overall rates. You can do this by checking the Email Stat Centre website (EmailStatCenter, n.d.).

The overall SMS open rate is harder to determine. Many reports put it at between 82% and 98%, but this is difficult to ascertain. The average clickthrough rate varies by source but is generally far higher than for email, at anywhere between 6% and 19% with overall response rates at above 30% (Tatango, 2016; Apifonica, 2016).

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

To make sure that your email marketing efforts are continually improving, it's important to test your campaigns. The most common form of direct marketing testing is to conduct an A/B split test. This is a test that involves sending one version of your newsletter or SMS to a specified percentage of your database, while sending a modified version to the remainder of your database. Some factors to test include:

- Open and response rates across different subject lines, calls to action, and delivery times.
- Optimal number of links in an email for clickthrough rates and conversions.
- Different copy styles and copy length.
- The effect of video on delivery rates, open rates and conversions for email and MMS.
- Balance of text and image ratio.

By monitoring the results of each send, you can determine which version yielded the desired results. You can, for instance, test variations of your call to action to determine which is more effective in persuading subscribers to click through.

Examples of what to test:

- Subject lines (for email)
- Send times
- Best day to send
- Layout
- Text vs. button links
- Database segmentation
- Call to Action
- Copy differences (for SMS).

Testing and monitoring your send statistics go hand in hand. It's important to analyse your results after sending to ensure you're implementing the most effective strategies for your database.

Useful KPIs include:

- Open rate
- Clickthrough rate
- Number of emails forwarded
- ROI
- Number of social shares
- Database growth
- Conversion rate (activity on your site generated by the email)
- Delivery or bounce rate.

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