EXPLORING THE BENEFITS OF REAL-TIME EMAIL

Written by David Daniels
The Relevancy Group, LLC
Exploring the Benefits of Real-Time Email:

*Driving Marketing Effectiveness*

Written by David Daniels, The Relevancy Group, LLC

Research Sponsored by Liveclicker

**Executive Summary**

Overall 73 percent of consumers utilize their mobile phone to access one or more email accounts, making it crucial for marketers to ensure that email messages render properly on mobile phones. Utilizing device detection, a marketer can actually serve different images, not just resize them, creating a powerful mobile-optimized experience. The rise in the adoption of mobile devices presents significant opportunities for marketers to leverage real-time email marketing because real-time capabilities allow marketers to keep content fresh within emails without requiring the sending of additional messages. Marketers that leverage existing customer data and pair it with context in a real-time manner will increase the accuracy and relevancy of their offer.

The Real-Time Email Value Ladder is a guide to getting started with Real-Time Email. The Ladder progresses from the easiest things to implement to some of the more involved tactics, such as those that require leveraging data from disparate sources. For example, utilizing countdown timers and live social feeds has shown a fifteen percent to near seventy percent increase in click-through rates when comparing emails that included a countdown timer to those that did not include one. This paper provides examples and a guide on how to implement real-time email.

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Mobile Email Adoption is Mainstream Across Nearly Every Age Group

Consumers across nearly every age group are using their mobile devices to read and interact with their email (see figure 1). Overall 73 percent of consumers utilize their mobile phone to access one or more email accounts, making it crucial for marketers to utilize responsive design and device detection to ensure that email messages, as well as websites render properly on mobile phones. With device detection, a marketer can actually serve different images, not just resize them, creating a powerful mobile-optimized experience (see figure 2).

Thirty-two percent of consumers state that email marketing messages are too small to read and interact with on mobile and 26 percent report that websites are not formatted for their mobile phones. Forty-two percent of consumers report that they use their mobile phone to triage their email inbox, quickly deleting messages or marking them as unread in order to re-read them later on their computer. Nearly one third (31 percent) state that they use their mobile phone as their primary email device. This behavior is highest among 27-to-38 year olds, where 36 percent state their mobile phone is their primary email device. Marketers should enlist the following strategies to drive subscriber engagement on mobile devices:

- Utilize device detection to target images to dynamically display offers within the email that are optimized to a subscriber’s specific device.
- Utilize the prevalence of apps and leverage email as a channel to drive app interaction. Include app download buttons within the email that are specific to the subscriber’s device.
- Utilize links within the email that directly trigger the app to open for a more seamless cross-channel experience.

*Figure 1 – Consumer Mobile Email Adoption by Age – 2014*

Question Asked: Do you currently access one or more of your personal email accounts on a mobile device such as a cell phone, smart phone? (Select one) Source: The Relevancy Group, LLC 2014 Consumer Survey n=1,011 3/14, US Only
Consumers Are Swayed by Relevancy and Message Frequency

The rise in the adoption of mobile devices presents significant opportunities for marketers to leverage real-time email marketing. Why? Because real-time capabilities allow marketers to keep content fresh within emails without requiring the sending of additional messages. Marketers have only seconds to capture the consumers’ attention, create a seductive moment and earn a conversion. This is documented by the forty-two percent of consumers that utilize their mobile phone to triage their inbox, quickly deleting or marking the message as unread. Far fewer consumers, 14 percent, forward the message to themselves to be read later. When it concerns email marketing, consumers have the same behaviors on their mobile devices as they do on their desktop computers. When asked what they don’t like about getting email messages on their mobile phone:

- Forty-four percent stated frequency. They are sent messages too often, “I get too many messages.” (See figure 3).
- Many are sensitive to relevancy. Thirty-seven percent stated that marketing messages are not relevant to them.
- Rendering hinders engagement. Nearly one third (32 percent) stated that the messages are too small to read and interact with and a quarter (26 percent) stated that when they click-through, the website is illegible on their mobile device.

Marketers must focus on frequency, relevancy and real-time capabilities to capture consumer attention and drive engagement.
Data Access and Program Coordination Challenge Marketers

Marketers are challenged by the organization’s dysfunction, as marketing channels and disciplines are siloed (see figure 4). Often what prevents marketers from utilizing data to improve relevancy is that they don’t have access to it and/or lack the resources to coordinate programs, offers and staff across channels. As marketers begin to think about implementing real-time email, they must seek coordination and organizational buy-in first. Real-time email doesn’t always require access to data, but to accomplish many of the most advanced real-time email tactics it will require access to data. The overall organizational shifts to cloud computing will simplify data access. Marketers must be prepared to define the value of the data and begin to map out different offers for different types of circumstances that will happen in real-time. It is important to leverage existing customer data and pair it with context in a real-time manner, which will increase the accuracy and relevancy of the offer.
Real-Time Email Marketing Adoption Is Increasing

Given the volume of email marketing and the overload of messages that consumers are feeling, more marketers are embracing real-time triggering and targeting tactics, in part to cut through the clutter and stand out in the inbox. It is imperative for marketers to embrace these relevance-empowering tactics such as 37 percent of enterprise marketers that are utilizing the subscriber’s location to change the offer content (see figure 5). These real-time tactics deliver revenue and efficiency gains as many of these items are automated and do not require a great deal of set-up. While some of the tactics are easier than others to implement, the survey illustrates that marketers are increasing their use of real-time data and real-time email. Marketers utilizing these tactics will have a greater competitive advantage over those marketers that are blasting the same message to every subscriber. Additionally when asked about their 2015 priorities for improving ROI, marketers are focused on improving their relevance through the use of analytics, segmentation, real-time data and content (see figure 6).
Figure 5 – Email Tactics Regularly Utilized

Question Asked: Which of the following email marketing tactics have you used in the last six months? (Select all)
Source: The Relevancy Group, LLC/Executive Marketer Survey n=274 Mid-Market n=137, Enterprise n=137, 10/14 US Only

Figure 6 – Top Five 2015 Priorities for Improving ROI

Question Asked: What are your top five priorities for improving the ROI of your email marketing programs in 2015? (Select top five)
Source: The Relevancy Group, LLC/Executive Marketer Survey n=274 Mid-Market n=137, Enterprise n=137, 10/14 US Only
Implement the Real-Time Email Value Ladder

The Real-Time Email Value Ladder is a guide to getting started with Real-Time Email. The Ladder progresses from the easiest things to implement to some of the more involved tactics, such as those that require leveraging data from disparate sources. From Novice to Expert, items such as Countdown Timers can be implemented in a matter of minutes (see figure 7).

**Figure 7 – The Real-Time Email Value Ladder**

Source: The Relevancy Group, LLC/Liveclicker Inc.

Utilize Countdown Timers and Live Social Feeds to Quickly Implement Real-Time Email

One of the first and easiest tactics is to put countdown timers in an email. This provides a sense of urgency. Client testing has shown a fifteen percent to near seventy percent increase in click-through rates when comparing emails that included a countdown timer to those that did not include one. Additionally marketers utilizing countdown timers have seen an increase in revenue and orders, with some reporting as much as a thirteen percent increase in the number of orders. A best practice when using countdown timers is to feature them front and center, above the fold in the email marketing message (see figure 8). These are great for time-based sales, new product launches, webinars and events. Countdown timers can be deployed in five to ten minutes simply by adding an HTML embed code to the email template. Marketers do not need to change ESPs (Email Service Providers) to implement this technology; it works with any sender system. Additionally, implementing live social feeds is easy to do but takes a bit more time. This adds a Twitter or Facebook feed to an email marketing campaign, which regardless of the time it is opened will add context to address consumer-time shift behavior (see figure 9).
**Figure 8 – Novice – Countdown Timers**

- Drive urgency
- Cases 15% - 68% increase CTR
- Cases 13% increase in orders

Source: Liveclicker Inc.

**Figure 9 – Novice – Live Social Feed**

- RealTime Social Context
- Fight against time-shifting read behavior

Source: Liveclicker Inc.
Utilize Location to Improve Content Relevance

The next rung in the Real-Time Value Ladder is the Intermediate step. This delivers real-time individual personalization based on an opener’s location, weather, temperature or device type to build real-time context. This requires the marketer to have multiple sets of creative. For example, marketers can automatically change content based on temperature and weather (see figure 10). Another example of creating personal context is location, by inserting local content into a message based on the subscriber’s location at the time of open. Inserting local offers or maps for stores in that subscriber’s area is an effective way to personalize email (see figure 11). This concept also applies to the ability to leverage real-time A/B testing and automate the winning version to the rest of the marketer’s list. Often implementing testing is difficult because it implies rework. With real-time A/B testing, the two tests are deployed and once the predefined winning metric is reached the better performing version of the test is automatically deployed to the recipients who have yet to open the email. Lastly in the Intermediate phase is Embedded Video (see figure 12). On average, Embedded Video in Email generates thirty-five to forty-five percent more plays because of mobile. Mobile devices will render the video and play it with one tap, whereas linked video thumbnails require two taps to play. Not without its limitations as some email clients still do not render video, but Liveclicker finds that on average a business-to-consumer sender can reach sixty percent of their audience with inline or full-screen video, delivering high value for marketers. This is great for media companies, as well as for retail and travel providers that have high value or complicated products to sell. Cases have shown up to a sixty-six percent increase in revenue per email delivered versus more traditional video inclusion methods.

*Figure 10 – Intermediate – Real-time context based on device type and other attributes*

- Respond in real-time to device used, weather, temperature, location, etc.

Source: Liveclicker Inc.
Figure 11 – Intermediate – Real-time context based on location

- Respond in real-time to device used, weather, temperature, location

Source: Liveclicker Inc.

Figure 12 – Intermediate – Embedded Video

- 35% - 45% more video plays vs. static video thumbnail
- Cases up to 66% increase revenue per email delivered

Source: Liveclicker Inc.
Utilize Changing Content and Dynamically Insert it Into Email

Ideal for media companies, this approach involves taking ever-changing live content from the website and dynamically formatting it in real-time to insert it into the email. This allows the marketers to perform a web scrape and apply a style guide and format the content to match the marketer’s template. If a marketer publishes inventory status to their website this could be a way to provide live inventory updates and create a sense of urgency or simply expire items that are no longer available. The ability to scrape live content off a website works well to ensure that the latest content that is being published to a website is also being pushed in email marketing messages (see figure 13). This ensures that the latest content is always available even after the email is sent. When the email is opened it will insert the latest content from the website and dynamically insert it into the email.

Figure 13 – Advanced – Live Web Content

Dynamically Update Pricing, Inventory and Specific User Information in Real-Time

This approach is at the expert stage of the Real-Time Value Ladder, as it requires the marketer to tap into disparate data sources. Leveraging custom feeds allows marketers to look up data, such as fare data in real-time based on the user’s location or subscriber input. These feeds allow live real-time look up of inventory information, which is ideal for travel providers, retailers and particularly flash sale sites (see figure 14). This feature can be used for a number of value added personalized techniques such as swapping out product images based on the attributes of the email or product inventory status (see figure 15). These real-time data feeds can also be used to insert personalized information for loyalty program statements or even financial data such as billing statements. This approach is perfect for any
marketer that has a loyalty program and wants to deliver personalized loyalty statements within the body of the email (see figure 16).

**Figure 14 – Expert – Real-Time Personalization Utilizing Disparate Data Sources**

- Dynamically update prices based on real-time data

**Figure 15 – Expert – Real-Time Image Swapping Utilizing Disparate Data Sources**

- Dynamically swap products based on real-time availability

Both Figure 14 and 15 Source: Liveclicker Inc.
Quick Win Analysis: Deploy Based Upon Ease of Implementation and Value to the Business

Marketers should deploy these tactics based on how quickly they can be implemented and value that they deliver to the business. Deploying emails based on device context, Embedded Video, Weather, Live A/B Testing is rather easy and these tactics deliver the highest value to the business (see figure 17). While very easy to implement, countdown timers and social feeds deliver some value but not as much as some of the other items in the upper right hand corner of figure 17. As always, marketers should implement and test these tactics incrementally, then continue to climb the Real-Time Email Value Ladder.
Figure 17 – Real-Time Value Ladder – Quick Win Analysis

Dynamic updates for:
- Price
- Inventory
- Rewards balances
- Payments/account activity

Value to the Business

- Live web content
- Device context
- Weather
- Live AB testing
- Local maps
- Embedded video
- Social feed
- Countdown timer

Ease of Implementation

Source: The Relevancy Group, LLC/Liveclicker Inc.
Liveclicker delivers rich customer experiences for leading brands across email and the web. Its RealTime Email solution brings email relevance to a higher order by enabling marketers to respond to each recipient’s constantly shifting personal context, in real-time. Bring messages to life, amp recipient engagement, and increase clicks and conversions with the most intuitive and powerful real-time email system: RealTime Email.

The Relevancy Group provides market research, survey design and consulting. We assist marketers (buyers) connect with vendors (sellers) and manage the vendor selection process; each year we represent tens of billions of email messages that are out for bid for new solution providers. We provide educational and advisory resources to advance our clients and the market’s understanding of relevance in order to deepen their customer relationships. The Relevancy Group is dedicated to educating the market on the imperative tactics needed to foster trust with consumers and improve an organization’s relevance within the broader online economy. Working with the leading brands, vendors and associations that comprise our economy, The Relevancy Group acts as an educator and trusted advisor in the aim of optimizing omnichannel connected marketing strategy and tactics. The Relevancy Group publishes research, educational resources and consults with businesses on vendor selection, mergers/acquisitions and other strategic imperatives.

David Daniels – CEO and Co-Founder, The Relevancy Group, LLC | On Twitter @emaildaniels
For over a quarter of a century, David has been a marketing industry proponent. Currently as CEO of The Relevancy Group, David directs market research and consulting essential to digital marketing. Direct Magazine said David is “one of the most influential experts in email marketing, if not the most influential.” David is also the Founder, President and Publisher of The Marketer Quarterly, a digital magazine for marketers. Co-author of the book ‘Email Marketing An Hour A Day’, David has held senior level positions at Forrester and JupiterResearch, Apple, Anthropologie, MacWarehouse, Proteam and the earliest online retailers on CompuServe. David advises many industry associations including the Online Trust Alliance (OTA), the Direct Marketing Association (DMA) and the email experience council (eec). David wrote a syndicated column for ClickZ for ten years and is a contributor to the Weekend Today Show on NBC.