

# Introduction to Email Marketing

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# Introduction

Email marketing is a 'traditional' marketing method that continues to engage customers and potential customers. It is an efficient tool for businesses of all sizes to share their story, direct people to your website, and ultimately achieve orders.

Email marketing is a way to both build new relationships and improve and nurture existing ones. It does this by providing valuable information, insights or offers to help your customers achieve their goals. The right email can boost your brand awareness, promote your business, and market your products ultimately resulting in increased sales

The [average open rate for the food and beverage industry is 15.2% \(Campaign Monitor\)](#). How do you ensure your message gets clicked and read? In this guide, we'll walk you through some simple steps to get you started. We'll provide you with hints and tips to get your message noticed and detail the best practices to keep your customers happy and help you meet targets.

This guide is part of the ***Bord Bia Think Digital programme***. This programme seeks to enhance the digital capabilities of Irish food, drink and horticulture companies whilst equipping businesses with the resources and supports needed to deliver best in class digital activation. Find resources, webinars and more on the [Think Digital](#) page. This is one of a range of ***Client Capability*** services available, find out more about our additional resources [here](#). For further support please reach out at [clientcapability@bordbia.ie](mailto:clientcapability@bordbia.ie).

# Section 1: Getting Started with Email

## Plan for Email Engagement

Creating your email strategy is easier than you might expect. When it's done well, it helps to drive awareness and orders. A regular newsletter that people can sign up to reaches those who want news and offers.

In advance of developing an email marketing strategy, it is important to have a developed digital marketing strategy. This will challenge you on the who you are targeting, the opportunities for your business and ultimately the rationale for why you are pursuing specific channels. Support on developing a digital marketing strategy is [available here](#).

## Why Email?

- **Get Immediate Results:** Every sale, order or conversion is important to any business – all of which can be facilitated by email. Email is a direct link to your customers and with a direct link comes opportunity.
- **Email Delivers Direct:** Email is a personal conversation 1-on-1 with your customer – allowing you to create build and nurture your customer relationships.
- **Great Return on Investment (ROI):** Email marketing experiences relatively high engagement rates in comparison to other marketing techniques. You are [six times more likely to click an email than a tweet \(Campaign Monitor, 2019\)](#).
- **Measurable Results:** Using an email provider gives you access to every element of performance, from clicks to open rates to orders, all while also managing your GDPR obligations. All these analytics and stats can be reviewed to derive insights which will in turn further improve your marketing efforts.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** Email is a low-cost tool that creates a direct connection to your end-user. HubSpot reports that email generates \$42 for every \$1 spent, which translates to 4,200% ROI, so getting email right is worth your while (Hubspot, 2022).
- **Better Reach:** With an estimated [four billion email users worldwide \(Hubspot, 2022\)](#), the reach of email is much greater than most social channels.

## Start with your Contacts

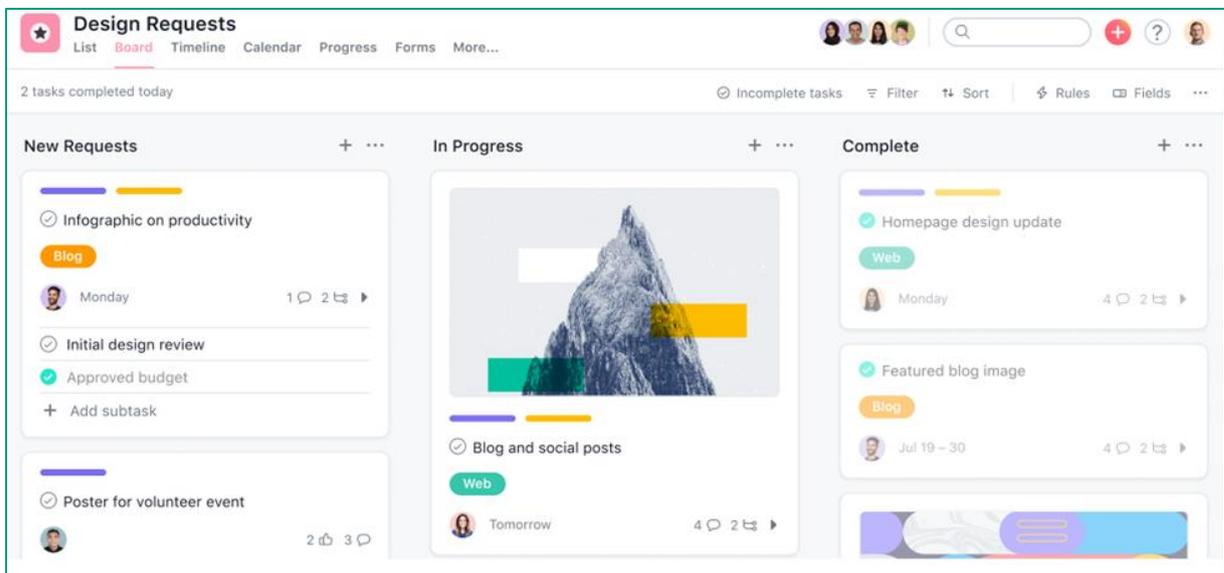
An email list or database is one of the most important elements of a successful campaign. Your database contains the list of names and contact details for people who permit you to contact them. This is the starting point for your email marketing efforts. You can gather contact details for your list through opt-in forms on your website, competitions or prizes or social media

ads, etc. An email database is usually stored in an email service provider or a Customer Relationship Manager (CRM).

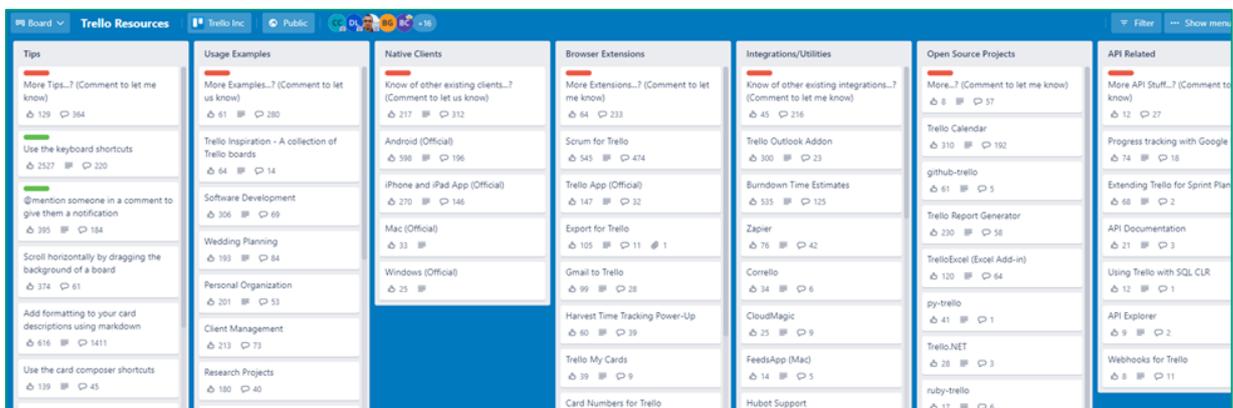
## Fail to Plan, Plan to Fail

It's a good idea to plan before you start emailing your database. There are multiple options when approaching how to plan your email database. You could use a planning tool like [Trello](#) or [Asana](#), use a [pre-set template](#), or even a simple spreadsheet can work just as well. This gives you visibility to plan the dates you want to send your emails, organise seasonal offers and to whom you want to send your email.

Trello and Asana are planning tools that help to track projects, organise your marketing materials and visualise your progress.



Asana Dashboard



Trello Dashboard

## Identify the Goals of your Campaign

It is important before jumping right in to think about what it is you want to achieve and why. Perhaps you're launching a new product that you want to share. Maybe you want to increase your Open Rates or Click-Through Rates (CTR). Your email messaging and plan will change depending on your desired outcome and your pre-defined objectives. Usually, the end goal for email is a conversion, to turn potential customers into customers. It's good practice to focus on your macro goal, such as Conversion, and refine your micro goals (CTR and Open Rates) within in order to reach that.

## Know your Audience

Email is a useful tool for reaching customers. It becomes even more useful when you can personalise a specific message to a specific audience. Personalisation refers to targeting an email campaign to a specific audience based on the information you have about them in your database. This can include name, activity, location or gender. [Revenue is 5.7 times higher in emails that use personalisation \(Campaign Monitor\)](#). Imagine the delight a new customer feels when they get an initial 10% discount code, or for a returning customer who gets a gift as a thank you. Think about segmenting your audience so you can reach the right people at the right time.

## Aligning with your Buyer Personas

Buyer personas are a useful way to understand your customer in a way that allows you to tailor all your marketing efforts, thus increasing the effectiveness. The importance in using and understanding buyer personas is no different for email marketing. Aligning your email campaigns with your researched and validated buyer persona information helps you to customize and personalise campaigns based on customer characteristics.

## Segmenting for Success

Once you have a detailed understanding of your audience, you can then look at segmentation. This is when you break a large email list into smaller categories that align with:

- The reader's interests
- Buying patterns and preferences
- Geographic location
- Job title
- Company name
- Birthday
- Age
- Products purchased
- Language

Segmentation ensures the right email gets to the right person thus allocating resources effectively and ensuring the effectiveness of the campaign.

## When should you send it?

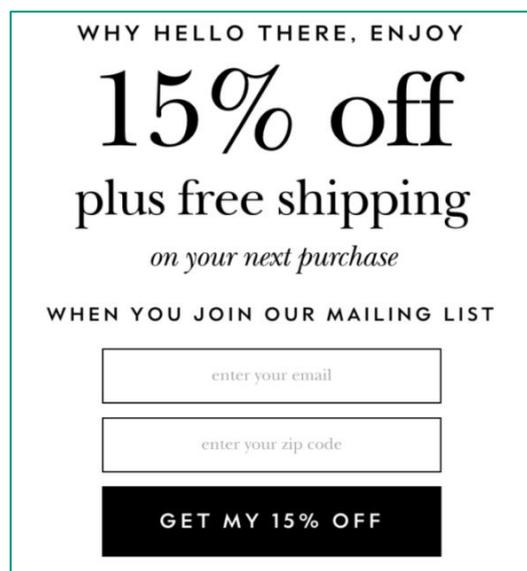
Consistency is important for emails. Decide on weekly, monthly or at the cadence that suits you and test it. Customers like to know when to expect news and you can experiment with send times to find out what works best for your business. Globally, [Fridays offer the highest email open rates \(18.9%\) \(Campaign Monitor, 2022\)](#) so you could start there. You can even use timing to your advantage, e.g., 'Tuesday Treats', or 'Friday Freebies', to increase engagement.

## Managing GDPR

GDPR is a European law that regulates how personal data is collected, used and held. You must request consent for email sign-up, only collect data that is relevant to your business, and ensure you delete contact data if requested. Most email providers have GDPR standards, which can help you to manage it. Find out more about how [GDPR impacts email here.](#)

## Magnets and Building your Lists

You might have heard the phrase 'lead magnet' in relation to marketing emails. This is an offer in exchange for an email address. It could be a piece of content or information. It's something of value that you offer to your audience to request their sign-up. In the case of a food or drink business, it might be a sign-up offer, such as 10% off your first order.



WHY HELLO THERE, ENJOY

**15% off**  
plus free shipping  
*on your next purchase*

WHEN YOU JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

enter your email

enter your zip code

**GET MY 15% OFF**

Example of a Lead Magnet

# Section 2: Getting your Emails Opened and Read

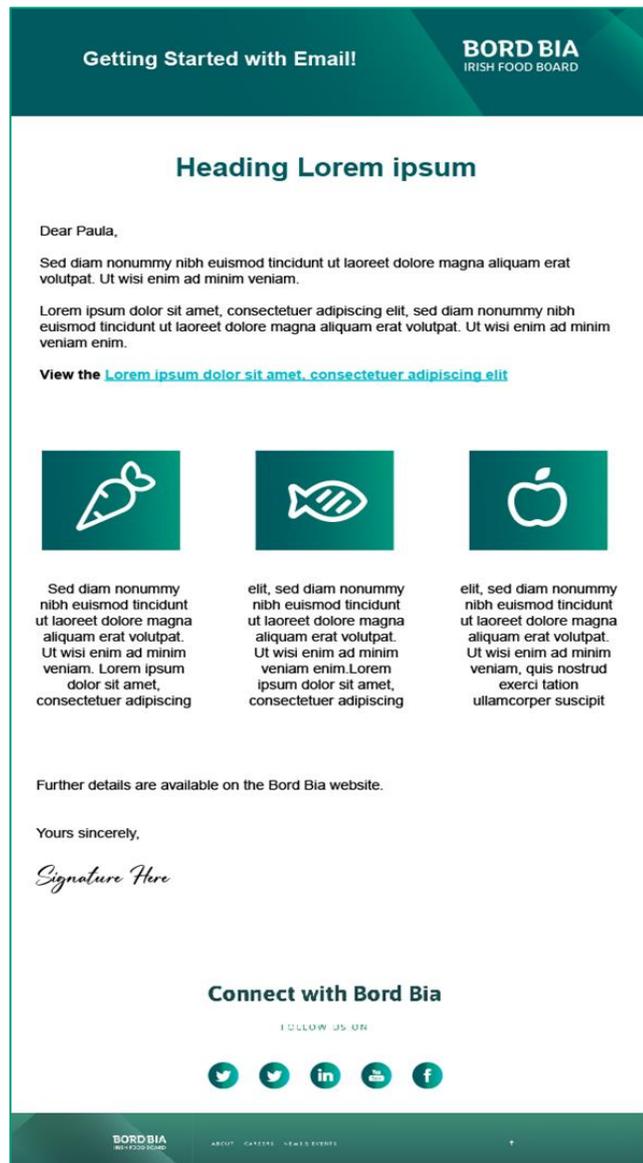
## 9 Tips for Great Emails

### *Step 1: The Email Design*

Aim for eye-catching emails that don't go over the top. Stick to your brand colours and aim for three or four blocks of text, depending on your format. Email marketing tools can help you to create a professional template without needing an external designer or IT skills.

#### **A Note on Email Design:**

- **Templates:** Sometimes it's easier to start a design from scratch. This may require design or IT skills, but it can give you a bespoke feel to your emails. You can find some ready-made [HTML templates](#) online. If HTML is not for you, most email service providers offer flexible design options, with drag and drop functionality to best match the layout that suits you and your business.
- **Single Column vs Multiple Columns:** Deciding on the number of columns depends on your subscriber and if they open their emails on mobile or desktop. Single columns work well for mobile, it's easier for the user to navigate and a single column ensures that it's obvious what information is important. Double or multiple columns can work well on desktop and give readers a different experience. Multiple columns can be useful when the focus is on images instead of text.
- **White Space:** White space is the area in your email without any images at all. White space is crucial as it makes your email feel friendlier and helps focus the reader's attention where it matters, on your email content!
- **Images/Design:** It is important to ensure your images are optimised, that they are the right size and format and are relevant to your offer. When adding visuals, always remember to include your logo in your template and use your brand colours. See more on images in our fourth tip below.
- **Fonts:** A good rule of thumb is to pick one font and stick to it. You can use a mix, but we recommend using two at a maximum. Ensure your headings and body copy are easily legible. A font size of 14-16px is good practice for emails.



Example of Email Design Elements detailed above

## Step 2: The Subject Line

Look at any newspaper and you'll find snappy headlines that catch the reader's attention. That's how your subject line should work.

- **Keep it Short:** Best practice is to aim for a subject line that is 70 characters or less. You can find a [free character counter here](#) to check the length.
- **Create Urgency:** Use short, snappy language to encourage people to take action. For example, 'Our flash sale starts now.'
- **Don't be afraid to use Emojis:** These are familiar to most email recipients and can help to catch the reader's attention. The appropriateness in using emojis can vary dependent on your audience and brand (tone of voice).

- **Make it Actionable:** Always include one, clear call-to-action in your email e.g., 'Find out more about Domino Chocolates'. Don't be tempted to use multiple CTAs, it confuses people and thus lose their effectiveness.

## 10 Subject Lines that you can use for Inspiration

1. 5 great reasons to choose our chocolate
2. The new menu is here
3. Get your hands on our cheese
4. 7 magical reasons to choose our craft beer
5. 🐟Give the gift of fish 🐟
6. Get early access to our new Domino X butter collaboration
7. Meet your future favourite beer
8. Meet the team at Domino Coffee
9. Get 10% off your next order at Domino Cheese
10. The secret is out, Domino coffee is here!

### ***Step 3: The Preheader Text***

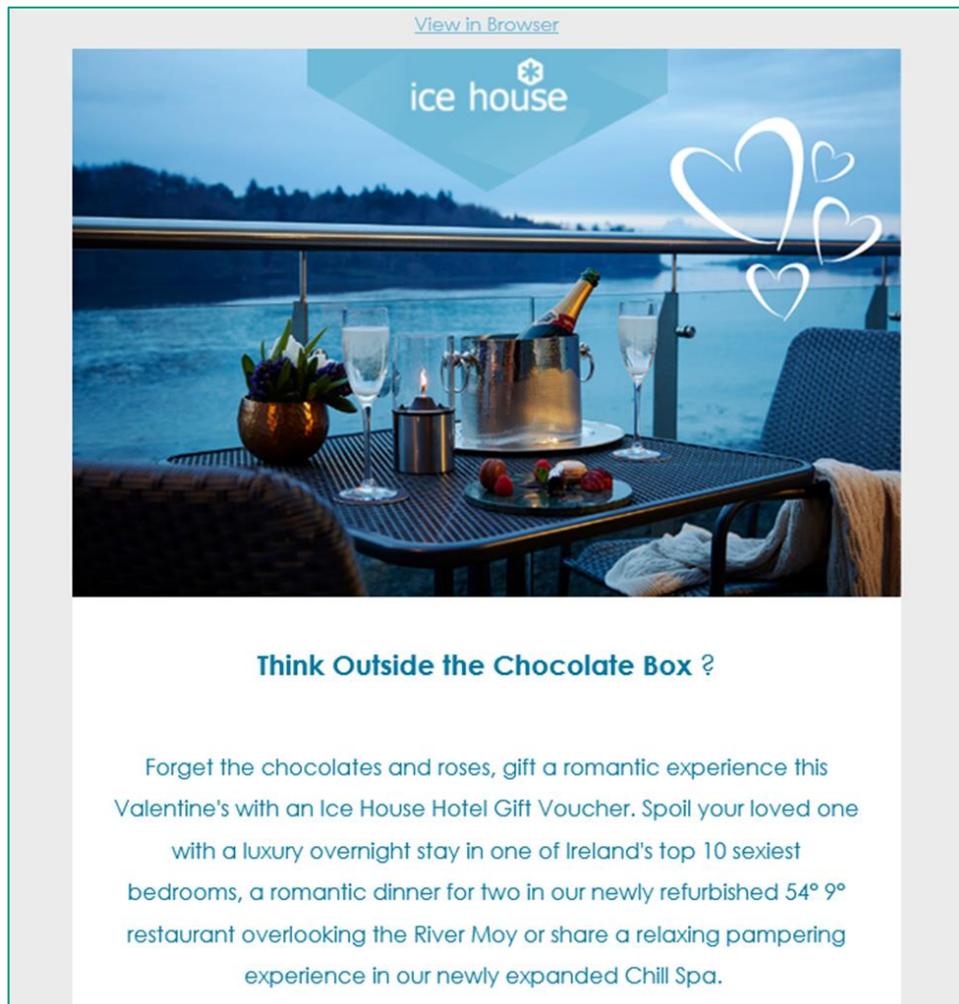
The preheader text is usually the first thing that appears after the subject line in an email. It is especially important if your customers tend to check their emails on mobile, as it appears front and centre below the subject line. Keep your preheader text short and enticing. A good rule of thumb is 40 characters or fewer. The preheader should provide a reason for the reader to open the full email.

#### 3 TOP PREVIEW EXAMPLES

1. The wait is over! Dominos Coffee is here
2. Don't miss out on your discount code!
3. New flavours for your sweet tooth

### ***Step 4: Use Eye-Catching Images***

Kick off your email with a big, bright, beautiful image. Choose colourful eye-catching scenes or professional images of your products. The key to using images in email is to create an emotional impact. Aim to create a connection with the reader that makes them want to learn more, read more or buy something.



*Example of use of Eye-Catching Images in Email*

### **Free Image Resources**

- [Pixabay](#)
- [Unsplash](#)
- [Pexels](#)
- [Canva](#)
- [Creative Commons](#)

### **Step 5: Using Real Images**

Product photography is an art in its own right. Your product photos can impact your shoppers buying decision, increase conversions and increase purchases. Learn more about how to capture [great images for your business at home with our Picture Perfect guide](#).

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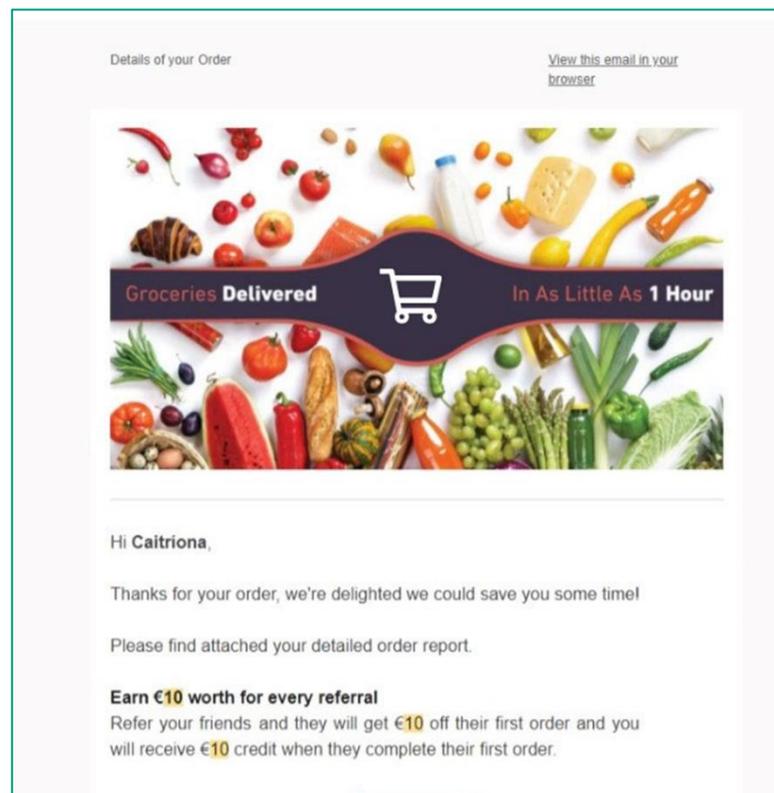
**Top Tip:** Choose images optimised for all devices and ensure you use Alt Text. This is useful if the images won't display properly in someone's email.

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### **Step 6: The Body of your Email**

Once you know what you want your email to do, you can write the text that will engage your audience. Keep the body of your email short, concise, and enjoyable. Less is more, shorter paragraphs work better and use the present tense, with descriptive words.

The body throughout your email from subject to signature should reflect your brand. Think of how you might chat with customers in a shop and use that to guide your emails. Use a consistent tone of voice in your email. If your business is playful and fun, let that flow through your email copy. If your business takes a serious, legacy approach, stick to the same tone in your email.



*Example of a Great Email*

### Top Tips: Best Practice for a Compelling Email Body

- Brevity is best.
- Use short sentences and paragraphs.
- Use Present Tense
- Make it snappy and get to the point quickly.
- Ensure consistent tone of voice
- Stick with 250 Characters per section and use four sections or less.
- Keep overall objectives and goals in mind.

#### ***Step 6: Special Offers***

Inboxes are flooded with emails trying to grab attention. Stand out from the crowd with an impressive and exciting offer for your customers.

You can and should relate your offers to the specific stages your buyer is in. Each customer joins your list at a different level, new customer, returning customer, and interested party. To go in-depth into customer decision journeys, check out this [helpful article from Hubspot](#), which outlines the buyer journey and where your email fits in and where it can have the most impact. When you know this, you can excite the right reader at the right time with a great deal. Types of special offers include a sign-up offer, first customer discount, returning customer gift, etc.

#### ***Step 7: Call-to-Action***

Supercharge your email with a call-to-action, such as 'Buy now', 'Learn more' or 'Ask me anything'. Your call-to-action should stand out from your main text and link directly to a matching page on your website. Use a graphic button to create a compelling CTA.

#### ***Step 8: Personalising your Email***

Did you know personalised emails have [26% higher open rates when compared with others \(Campaign Monitor\)](#). There are a few ways to personalise your email and when you combine these with segmentation, your email will delight and engage the reader.

Here are some ways to personalise your email:

- Include the person's name in the subject line and introduction.
- Send emails based on the person's last engagement, e.g., a recent buyer.
- Celebrate people's birthdays or other major holidays such as Christmas, Valentines Day, International Womans day, etc.

- Finish your emails with a personal signature, don't use a generic company sign-off.

### ***Step 9: Test your Campaign***

The last thing you should do before scheduling or sending an email is to test it. Send a preview to your email address or a colleague's. Check every link twice! Ensure it looks right on mobile and do a final check of your copy.

## Section 3: What Platforms Suits Me?

### Helping to Manage and Send your Emails

When creating an email for your business it's important to consider your long-term goals and objectives. The rewards are worth it, though. Email is one of the few channels that you can use to create an authentic connection with your customers. An email provider can help you to create and manage that connection.

Running your email campaigns through a dedicated provider gives lots of analytics and helps you to immediately measure the success of your emails.

Using an email provider also means that your email is less likely to end up in spam. A provider will also automatically unsubscribe a reader who requests it and this can help you to prevent any GDPR problems.

### What to Consider when Choosing an Email Marketing Platform

Email marketing providers *ultimately* offer the same thing. They help you to send emails in bulk. But the devil is in the detail and there are significant differences in the offering of multiple platforms that go beyond sending emails in bulk. It's a good idea to shortlist a couple of providers and see what they offer in terms of price and functionality before making a decision. These are some questions to consider:

- How does it manage lists? Free and paid options vary depending on the size of your database. There is usually an increase in functionality in direct correlation with your list size. Service providers that handle large list sizes usually offer sophisticated functionality with a lot of features.
- What Analytics are on offer?
- Does it integrate with your other systems, website, CRM?
- Can I monitor and improve email performance over time by comparing results to previous months or years?
- Does it offer scheduling and optimisation to send at the right time for your customer?
- Is it easy to use? Will your email template be easy to upload and manage or will you require external skills?
- Depending on the size of your business, you might need to think about how your Email Service Provider integrates with other systems. You will need a supplier that works well with your Customer Relationship Manager (if you have one) or other areas like eCommerce providers.

## 5 Free Email Marketing Tools

All of these providers offer free plans (up to a limit). It's worth doing a bit of research to see what feels right for you.

	Email Provider	About
	Hubspot	Easy-to-use, with drag and drop features.
	MailChimp	Free plans with templates and automation.
	Moosend	Lots of detailed analytics and automation.
	Sender	Drag and drop and solid analytics.
	SendGrid	Lots of integration options and delivery optimisation tools.

## Section 4: Measuring Email Results

### Test your Campaign and Measure your Success

If you think of every email with a specific goal in mind, you'll be on to a good start. When the email is complete, you can take some time to check if you met the goal. Your email metrics will tell you more about the goal and how you achieved it.

### Organising your Results

Using a dedicated email platform, like MailChimp or HubSpot is convenient as it measures everything. However, the data won't be useful if you can't take insights from it. Keeping your important results in one place, such as a spreadsheet, helps you to see trends over time and act where necessary. Here is a sample of what your spreadsheet might look like.

Email Name	Number of emails sent	Number of emails delivered	Deliverability	Bounce rate	Open rate	CTR	Unsubscribe rate
December 2021	400	350	87.5%	1%	62%	85%	2%
November 2021	390	345	88.46%	1.4%	67%	82%	1%

*Sample format of Results*

### What Metrics to Monitor

An email provider will give you lots of metrics to monitor. Find the ones that are most important to your business and look at how you could improve them.

- **Bounce Rate:** Number of visitors who leave your site after only one page visit.
- **Open Rate:** Refers to the number of people who open your email when it reaches their inbox.
- **Click-Through Rate (CTR):** Number of people that click on the CTAs in your email.
- **Unsubscribes:** Number of people who decide to opt-out of receiving your email.
- **Deliverability Rate** is the number of emails that reach your subscriber's inbox.

### Putting your Results to Work

There are many variables when it comes to email. By tracking common metrics, you can apply the information to your next emails to improve.

- Was your open rate higher than in your last email? What did you do differently to achieve this?
- If your open rate is low, you can work on updating your subject line.
- If your click-through is low, think about adding a compelling offer.

## A/B Testing

As you become more efficient with emails, you can focus on the details that make them work. AB testing is one way to track what works best for your business emails. AB testing is when you split your user list and send two different versions of your email to see what works best. For example, you might want to test subject lines to see which one generates more open rates.

## Key Takeaways

Email is a powerful tool that continues to deliver value. Here are a couple of key takeaways for you planning and sending your email.

**Treat your reader as a human being. Imagine you're writing your email to a friend or colleague. You're able to see the value of personalisation, with something as simple as using the person's name in your subject line.**

**Always keep your value proposition in mind when curating email content/campaigns**

**Incentivise your Call-to-action. Use an offer or treat as a reason to click on your website.**

**Choose a platform that works for you. Think about what you want to monitor and achieve and choose the platform that most aligns with that.**

**Email is part of your marketing mix, not separate from it. Keep to a consistent theme and tone across all your messaging, whether on social media, advertising, or your website. Email should reinforce your message, not distract from it.**

**Measure everything and change what you can. Focus on key areas to deepen the connection to your customer.**

# Resources

## Additional Think Digital Resources



**[Contact our Think Digital experts on the Client Capability Team here](#)**

This guide has been produced in conjunction with 256 Content

**[256 Content](#)** is a Dublin based strategic content marketing agency.

