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Open Rates: Open Rates Numbers and Their Meaning by Merrill Moreno

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Once you manage to get your email delivered to your recipients successfully, the next most important Email Marketing or newsletter metric is open rates. After all, does it matter at all if you delivered an email if nobody actually opened it and read it? In this section we'll talk about open rates metrics, how to evaluate them, and how to optimize them.Open rates DefinedThe open rates of your email is a percentage representation of the number of recipients who opened and read your email. For example, if you sent an email to a hundred people and fifty of them opened it, your open rates would be fifty percent. If you sent an email to a hundred people and fifteen of them opened it, your open rates would be fifteen percent.It's important to note that Open Rates tracking is not a perfect science. An email's open is registered when a single pixel graphic known as a tracking pixel loads. If you've been paying attention throughout this book, then you know that not all email service providers or all individuals load graphics regularly. This means that you may be experiencing emails that are opened but for which the open is not registered.Additionally, since open rates are tracked using a pixel graphic, any users who only receive or read the text-only version of your email will not be included in the open rates tracking for your email send.Desirable Open rates NumbersNailing down a desirable open rates percentage is nearly impossible since so many factors can contribute to open rates. Is your list healthy and new? How frequently do you send email? What time of day did you send email? Is your list an auto responder list?If you can obtain an open rates of greater than fifty percent, then you should be incredibly pleased with yourself. Open rates that hover in the twenty-five to thirty percent rates are considered a success as well. If your open rates dip below that level, it may mean that there are issues with your subject lines or the quality of your email list. However, lower open rates may be typical and even acceptable for the quality or type of your list.A better way to look at open rates rather than to simply set an arbitrary goal that may not be supported by your type of list, content, or other factors is to study the historical trends of open rates on your email products and strive to always improve them, setting goals to increase open rates percentages slowly over time and monitoring what behavior impacts your open rates both positively and negatively.What Your Open rates Percentages Say about Your Email CampaignIf your open rates is either extraordinarily low, trending downward with regularity, or much lower than you are used to seeing in on email marketing reports, then you may be experiencing one of the following errors with your email campaign strategy.Poor Subject Lines: The most common culprit of poor open rates is poor email subject line. If the reason for your less-than-desirable open rates is not immediately obvious, the first course of action should be to evaluate your subject lines.Poor Selection of Date and Time to Send:

The day of the week and the time of the day that you send an email can impact your open rates. Generally, sending after 9 a.m. Pacific Standard Time on a Tuesday-Thursday will generate the best results. Mondays, Fridays, and weekends are typically not "best day" to send email. However, based on your demographic and industry segment, these rules may not hold true.Over-Sending:

The more email that you send, the less likely people are to open it with regularity. With very few exceptions (high value content), the greater the volume of email you send to an individual, the fewer times he or she will open. If your open rates are low or trending downwards and you send multiple emails per week, you may want to evaluate if you're simply sending too much email to your subscribers to keep them engaged.Seasonal Sends: Seasonal factors can also impact open rates for your email. While you may think that, if you are a retail outlet, the time of year when your users will most want to hear from you is between the end of November and the middle of December, you may not be right. In fact, that time period is the highest email volume period of the year, so users

are often more selective about what they do and don't open in their crowded inboxes. On the other end of the spectrum, internet activity as a whole is lowest in the summer. You may experience lower open rates in the summer as users spend less time on their computers or mobile devices.Bad Email List: Finally, you may be getting poor open rates simply because your email list isn't a very high quality one. If you rented or purchased your email list and the users are not already familiar with or brand advocates of your product or company, you'll experience lower open rates than with a list that you built from your own website. Also, the younger your demographic is, the less they will be tied to opening emails as younger demographics are more comfortable with social media or text messaging as a form of communication. Your email list may also simply be old. The longer a user has been subscribed to your email list, the less frequent their email opens typically become. It's important to always be infusing your email list with new, fresh, and enthusiastic members.If your open rates aren't in your desired target zone, the reasons or causes above are the most likely source of your low open rates.What Can You Do to Improve Your Open rates?In most cases, open rates is one of the easiest email metrics to improve upon, though it may take time and effort to do so. Use the following techniques to raise your open rates over time.Subject Line Tests: We will go into great detail about how to run an appropriate email testing about subject line in the final section of this book. The very first weapon in the battle against low open rates will be to develop best-practices for subject lines that drive high opens. We've given you subject line writing best-practices in general earlier in this ebook, but you'll need to establish some a/b email tests in order to determine what actually works the best for individual company, demographic, or market sector.Time and Date Tests: If your open rates are low, you may want to experiment with when you send your email. Remember also, that if your email is incredibly time-sensitive you want to ensure at least a three-day tail on it. Individuals do not check their email inboxes as frequently any more. You may also want to immediately move your email to a weekday send if you are sending on the weekend.Reduce Your Email Sends: If you send a high volume of email and see a drop off of or a regularly low open rate, try simply sending less email. Often times, less is more. If you are in an inbox daily, you may simply quickly get deleted. However, a weekly email or even bi-weekly may be more likely to get opened and read.Evaluate Your List: Finally, evaluate the quality of your list. Your open rates may have absolutely nothing to do with subject lines, times, dates, or email volume. It may simply be that you have put together a list of email addresses of individuals who are not that interested in or engaged with your product or brand. If that is the case, then you'll need to determine for yourself what the best course of action is. You can continue to email those individuals despite poor metrics. You can shift the focus of your email campaign to something more relatable to those individuals. You can re-allocate your time and effort to building a higher quality list. Ultimately, the solution is in your hands.Fixing a low open rate can take time and a great degree of trial and error. However, for successful email marketing, you must have emails that are actually opened and read. Mastering the open rates is an essential part of mastering email marketing.

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