



# GUIDE TO **Email Fatigue**

*strategies to increase engagement*

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## “You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.” - Dale Carnegie

A good salesperson knows how to read body language and uses it to guide how they interact with clients. We've all been there, you're explaining what your organization does, but notice the other person seems to be losing interest, they appear distracted, there's less eye contact and in general less engagement with what you are saying. So what do you do?

In person, the signs a customer or prospect are losing interest are apparent and ignoring them would be foolish. In the digital realm, many organizations keep talking until their potential client or customer either says they aren't interested (unsubscribes), falls asleep (ignores their emails), or worse yet, excuses themselves for a moment and calls in an anonymous tip for loitering (reports them as spam).

In the last decade, email marketing technology has improved dramatically. In fact, [90% of the world's digital data was created in just the last two years](#). Most email clients, marketing automation systems and CRM's hold a wealth of data that with the right tools can be used to more effectively communicate with your customers and optimize your email campaigns. Many organizations work overtime to create engaging, personalized content, and then hit send to their entire list. They don't pay attention to their subscriber's cues and send streams of email to customers who haven't touched an email from them in months. They wonder why their engagement rates are falling, their subscribers are unsubscribing, and their emails are getting caught in spam traps.

In this e-book, we're going to explore what the data says about email, and some ways to leverage AI to grow a happier, healthier more engaged email list. We will be looking at some topics, such as:

- **What is engagement**
  - **How engagement affects deliverability**
  - **Why people unsubscribe**
  - **Optimizing your timing**
  - **Personalizing your send frequency**
  - **Sizing up your subscribers with a welcome email**
  - **Creating customer-focused content**
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## All about engagement

So what is engagement and what is the best way to measure it?

### Delivery rate

An ounce of email marketing optimization is worth a pound of deliverability cure!

Whether you're a small business or a large enterprise, email marketing mistakes and lack of optimization techniques cost you opens, clicks, revenue, and attention in the inbox. And once your attention gets bad enough, you'll start having deliverability problems meaning that you'll land in spam or worse, get dropped at the front door.

Your delivery rate is the most basic metric of success in an email campaign. It's the total number of emails from a given email blast that did not bounce (unable to deliver) expressed as a percentage. According to [Hubspot](#), **generally, your delivery rate should be above 95% and ideally closer to 99%.**

If your delivery rate is low, the first place to start is by cleaning up your list. A high bounce rate hurts your "sender reputation," and can make ISP's and ESP's view you as a spammer. On the other hand, if your delivery rate suddenly drops with a particular email campaign, it's more likely that a word or formatting issue in the email triggered spam filters.

### Bounce Rate

Your bounce rate is divided into hard bounces and soft bounces. Email addresses that hard bounce should always be removed. These are likely out-of-date email addresses, senders who have blocked you, fake email addresses or misspelled email addresses. **Continuing to send to hard bounces is pointless and will hurt your sender reputation** lowering your overall deliverability.

Soft bounces are messages that were sent to valid email addresses but unable to be delivered for some reason. This could be due to a full inbox, the email server being down at the time the

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message was sent, or other reasons. If an address was previously active, it could be worth re-sending, but if it continues to bounce, the address should be scrubbed from your list.

## Inboxing Rate

It's possible for an email to appear as delivered, but still, end up in a spam folder. This is a metric that's not always possible to track, but that's worth being aware of. If multiple users flag a sender as spam, and as a group, users seem to be not interacting with messages from a specific sender, Google will begin to pre-classify messages from that sender as spam. **It's possible for a company to have a low bounce rate, but also a low inboxing rate.** [Google's postmaster tools](#) is a way to check your sender reputation and learn more about email best practices.

## Open Rate

Your open rate is the total number of delivered emails divided by your total number of opens. While your open rate can be a metric to compare one campaign's performance to another, [the absolute number can be an inaccurate representation](#) of engagement. Opens are tracked by sending a small blank image along with each email, when this displays, its downloaded from a server and an open is recorded.

Many modern email clients disable images by default if a sender is unknown. If a person views your email without enabling images, an open will not be recorded. On the other hand, some users may open every email before deleting it to keep their inbox clean, in which case, an open does not necessarily mean the user was interested in your email, but it does still provide useful information on when the user is typically engaging with their emails.

## CTR

CTR stands for "click-through-rate." Clicks are recorded when a subscriber opens a link in your email. Depending on the type of email, your CTR is usually a more reliable indicator of engagement, and in advertising emails, CTR is the only direct way to measure your conversion rate.

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## Conversion Rate

Conversion rate is the number that matters for most businesses. Your conversion rate is the number of people that received an email from you, and then completed a desired action such as making a purchase, visiting a webpage, donating to a cause, or signing up for a seminar.

## Churn Rate

Your churn rate is your total list size, divided by the total number of unsubscribes or hard bounces over a given period. If you have 5000 subscribers on your list, but you lose 1000 over a year, your annual churn rate would be 20%. According to [Hubspot](#), **the average B2B email list sees a churn rate of 22.5%**, but churn rates can vary widely by company.

Churn is divided into two categories, transparent and opaque:

- Transparent churn is the metric most marketers often pay attention to; unsubscribes, hard bounces, etc. These are addresses that you can no longer email due to subscriber action.
- Opaque churn is less apparent. These are subscribers who are not engaging with your emails, but your messages keep being sent. These could be subscribers suffering from email fatigue or may have your message delivered to an “other” folder. These are subscribers that you should be paying attention to, either to attempt a re-engagement campaign or eventually scrub them from your list.

Some churn is inevitable; people go through life changes, leave jobs and lose their emails, interests change, etc. The point of an email engagement optimization strategy isn't to maximize the size of each mailing; it's to keep the unnecessary churn to a minimum.

## Engagement affects deliverability

The warning signs of email fatigue show early in the data. If not addressed, email fatigue can lead to low engagement and a [lower sender reputation](#) for your IP address. Then things begin to spiral. A reputation as a sender of unwanted emails leads to lower inboxing rates, lower engagement, and further lowers the sender's reputation.

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Engagement with content is one of the flags many email service providers (ESP's) use to rank IP addresses and choose which emails end up in the spam folder. In one [case study](#), **a nonprofit found 65.13% of its tracked email going to spam, while similar nonprofit implementing better email marketing strategies had non-delivery rates lower than 1%.**

The same report analyzed the potential impact on fundraising for an average non-profit with an email list of 100,000 and found that for each 1% of email that goes to the spam box, the annual loss averaged \$1,203.84. **Despite the fact that non-profits average higher deliverability rates than commercial email, the study showed the average non-profit sees 1 in 8 of their emails caught in spam filters for an average loss of \$14,795.19 per 100,000 emails sent!**

## Why we unsubscribe?

While there are many distinct reasons a person may unsubscribe or stop reading a company's emails, they can be summarized in two core concerns.

- 1. Irrelevant or poor quality content**
- 2. Brand fatigue, or general email fatigue**

The research bears this out clearly. Despite the fact that most consumers say email is their preferred form of brand communication. Too much email will give even the most engaged subscribers a case of brand fatigue. Take a look at this research by MarketingSherpa. **Reasons 1, 3, 6 all fit into the fatigue category, and 2, 4, 5, 7 and 9 into the content category.**

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**Why do you unsubscribe from the email lists of companies with which you are [satisfied/unsatisfied]? Select all that apply.**



N = 2,400

marketingsherpa

Source: MarketingSherpa

Why is this more important than ever? Email is not dead, in fact, [77% of consumers](#) surveyed say they prefer to hear from companies via email over all other forms of advertising.

Email marketing maintains a high return on investment, averaging [\\$38 for every dollar spent](#) in 2015, but the top and bottom quartile differ drastically in ROI.

## Note: It's okay to unsubscribe

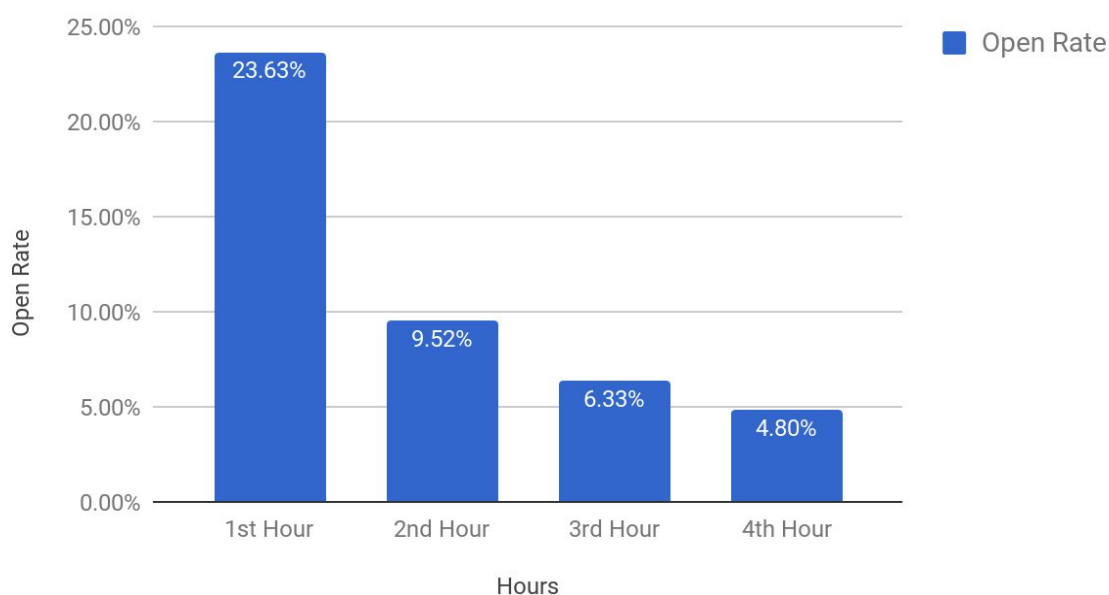
While it may be tempting to try to minimize your unsubscribe option to keep your list size up, if a person wants to unsubscribe, it's their legal right. If the unsubscribe option isn't obvious, they will likely just block your address or report your emails as spam which can lead to lower delivery rates with that email service provider in the future.

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## Personalize your timing with AI

Emails are time sensitive. In the first hour after delivery, an email has a 23% chance of being opened, that drops to less than 10% in the second hour, and **after 24 hours, an email has less than a 1% chance of being opened** according to a study by [GetResponse](#).

Email Open Rate After Delivery - GetResponse



As much as James likes your newsletter, if it hits his inbox on Tuesday, the day he's out of the office the entire day making sales calls, by the time he gets to check his email it's buried with dozens of other potentially more pressing emails.

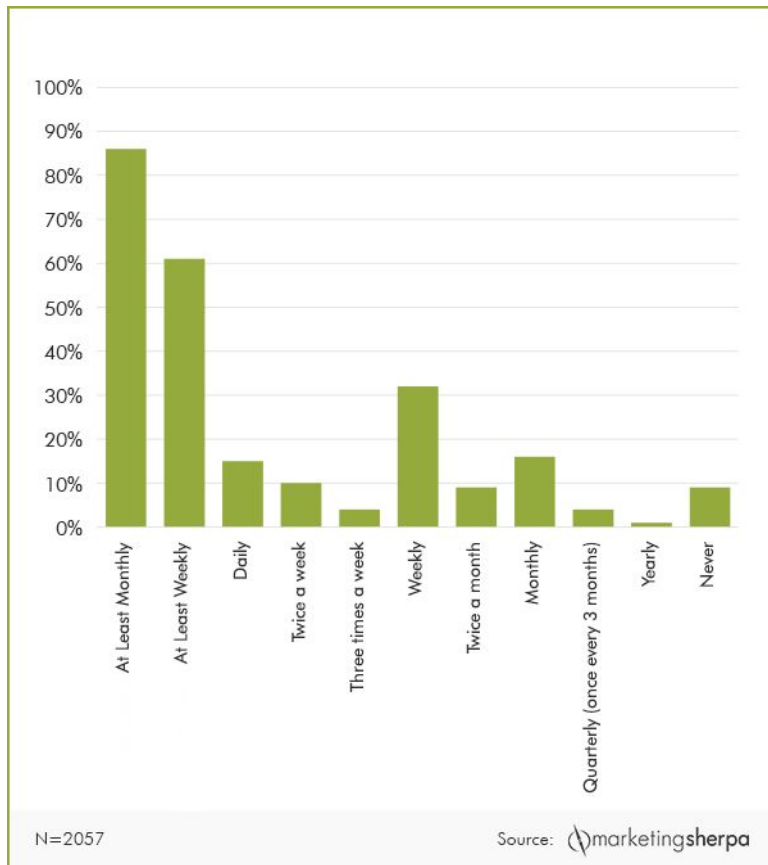
We are all creatures of habit. Some of us get caught up on email at 5 am before heading off for a run, others during lunch. Work email accounts are more likely to be checked during work hours, and personal accounts, (in theory at least!) off the clock. But the one universal feature of inboxes is that they put the newest emails on top, and with send time personalization you can make sure your emails are right on top every time.

In addition to higher engagement, there are also other benefits of spreading your mailings out over time. One-off email blasts are also more likely to trigger an ISP's spam filter and lower your IP's sender reputation, and if a particular campaign is not being well received, it's possible to

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limit the damage and stop the mailing. Some organizations have also found that if they don't spread their mailing out over time, their servers can slow down when people arrive at their site to respond to call to action.



**“86% of consumers said they would like to hear from brands they do business with monthly, but a full 15% would like to get emails daily.”**

**- MarketingSherpa.**

This particular study illustrates the importance of segmentation by cadence. There's a lot of ways to identify preferred cadence. You can always provide a subscriber preferences page where subscribers can choose which emails they would like to receive or how often they would like to hear from you. If a customer already has a full-blown case of email fatigue, they may be looking for the unsubscribe button by the time they see they can opt to receive fewer emails.

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**“The number one reason people unsubscribe from email lists is simply that they receive too many emails in general.” - MarketingSherpa**

## Personalized frequency

Emily loves email. In fact, she runs a company whose primary customer outreach is via email! Her inbox overflows on the weekends. During the week she tries to dig out so she can stay on top of business, but it's always a challenge. Last year was Emily's 30-year college reunion. After giving a modest donation, it seemed every day they had a new update for her. Student activities. Alumni Awards. Sports statistics. Cafeteria menus?! After a month of the deluge, Emily had enough and unsubscribed from all of it.

Emily is not alone. The number one reason people report unsubscribing from email lists is that they receive too many emails in general.

Consider an alternate ending to Emily's story. What if, at the end of the tax year, her school had sent her an update, the 10,000-foot view of what's happening at her school including a reminder about the tax deductibility of her last donation, some stats on last year's fund raising drive and

**“Some of your customers simply don't want to hear from you as often as others, and that's NOT a bad thing.”**

an appeal for repeat donations. Would she have given again? Unfortunately, Emily doesn't get their emails anymore so we'll never know. Emily had a full-blown case of email and brand fatigue. Had the marketing team caught the symptoms a bit earlier, noticing her lack of engagement with emails and slowing down the cadence, Emily would have been another regular donor.

Mark, on the other hand, attended the same school as Emily, but graduated 50 years ago. Mark is retired, and even though he lives on the other side of the country, he enjoys reading about what's happening at his alma mater. He sends a sizable monthly contribution, and the

regular updates provide him with a sense of community he values. He also likes to see where his money is going. And he has time to read the updates they send.

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To fully optimize your campaigns, you have to take into account that some of your customers don't want to hear from you as often as other, and that's NOT a bad thing. If you use a marketing automation system like HubSpot or Marketo, you already own the data you need to identify email fatigue and at what frequency each subscriber would prefer to hear from you. Using Seventh Sense's engagement classes, you can automatically choose what subscribers should get your email with the simple click of a box.

Dashboard / Marketing / Lists / Schedule List 39122

### Schedule List

|                 |   |                             |                          |                                     |
|-----------------|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Source List     | Email Everything List                         | #156 from HubSpot (hubspot) | Sync before scheduling?  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Start Delivery  | 12/08/2017 12:00 AM                           | Tomorrow at 12:00 AM EST    | 2017-12-08 05:00:00.000Z | UTC                                 |
| End Delivery    | 12/15/2017 12:00 AM                           | 12/15/2017 EST              | exactly 7 days later     |                                     |
| Workflow        | Tutorial Email - Traditional Nurture Campaign | x                           | ID #                     | 2278802                             |
| Delivery Scheme | 100% Personalized                             |                             |                          |                                     |

Email Engagement Level  Very High Engagement  Average Engagement  Low Engagement  Disengaged

Cancel

Seventh Sense's machine learning system determines whether a subscriber is heating up, staying at an average level of engagement, cooling down or is completely disengaged. Additionally, you can now see your entire audience in one snapshot to understand engagement level as a whole.



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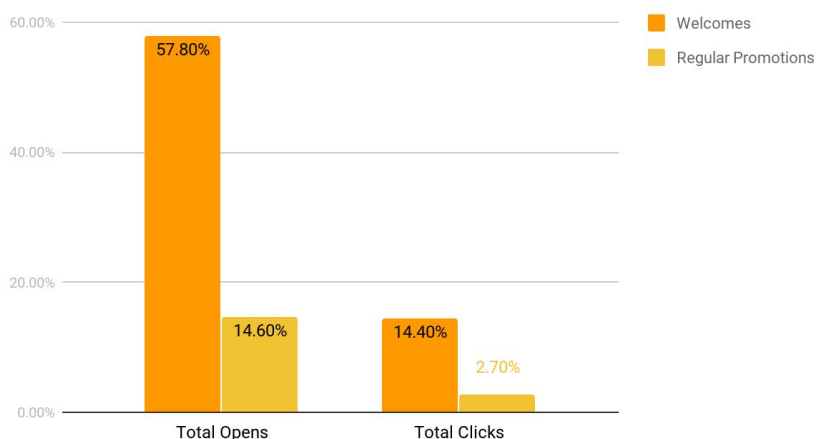
Often a small break is all it takes to pique a subscriber's interest again, where you would only have your most engaging content or promotions sent, deep discounts on products, end of year summaries, etc.

Taking the extra step to personalize delivery frequency can have profound effects in fighting email fatigue. In a [case study by HubSpot](#), Imagine Business Development doubled their engagement rates and conversions and decreased website bounces coming from email marketing by 33%. Imagine Business Development also wrote a [more detailed post](#) on how they did it.

## Size up your new subscribers with a welcome message

With open rates reaching 57%, welcome emails have some of the highest of any email you'll ever send. A welcome email or series can accomplish several goals.

Welcome Email Report - Experian



First, it's a great way to build trust with your subscribers and let them know what you have to offer and how often they will likely be hearing from you, but an automated welcome email can also be a great way to learn a little bit about your subscribers.

If list hygiene is the utmost priority, consider using a double opt-in system. While your list may grow a bit slower, having a healthy and engaged email list will pay dividends in the long run. According to a study by [Return Path](#) **"People who read all three (welcome) messages read 69% of the brands' email going forward; people who read none continued to ignore the brand's messages, reading only 5%."**

If a subscriber doesn't read a single of your welcome series messages, chances are, they won't be wanting bi-weekly newsletters from your organization.

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## Always add value

Over the course of this e-book, we've learned a lot about what subscribers like, don't like, and how to use technology to personalize your email delivery program around your subscriber's needs. In closing, it's worth taking a minute to remember that the core of any good email campaign is content.

Sometimes it's worth going back to the business basics. Are you putting the customer (your subscribers) first? Are you creating unique value for them? Before all else, send good content. It's always better to hold off on sending than to send poorly thought out, impersonal or repetitive emails. No matter how good your analytics are, if you send the same content over and over again, people will tire of it, and it will show up as a high churn rate and lower ROI.

Subscribers have differing interests and tolerance of email, but no one likes to get the same email over and over again. Research also shows that many subscribers give their emails over to businesses because they expect to get a unique value through the email subscription. What does your email program have to offer? **Are you adding value?**

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