How does your B2B email marketing performance stack up?

Concep 2018 Email Benchmarking Report

A snapshot of B2B email marketing performance in 2017 and a comparison of email campaigns sent by the Professional Services industry between 2016 and 2017



concep

Do what you always do, **get what you always got**

It is easy to slip into auto-pilot mode when you have a B2B email marketing platform that is simple to use and you have efficient workflows and processes in place.

Reporting dashboards clearly show a campaign's performance: which campaigns worked better than others, how many viewed the email, how many engaged with the content? But what does a high-performing campaign look like in your business? How do you compare with other marketing professionals in your sector? What can you learn from other B2B firms who may have a similar audience?

Concep has analysed 122 million emails sent in 2017 by our clients across our six major sectors. All our clients are B2B and rely on high-value relationships.

Focus on 6 Sectors



Architecture, Engineering & Construction



Consulting



Financial Services



Legal



Real Estate



Other Professional Services

The 2018 Benchmark Study in numbers

122M emails

83K campaigns

This report looks at six sectors within professional services and how their B2B email marketing campaigns performance has changed since 2016 based on five performance metrics:

1.Delivery Rates

This metric shows the percentage of emails reaching the intended recipient's inbox. It is an indicator of the quality of the marketing lists being used and whether firms have taken on board strategies to improve deliverability.

2. Open Rates

The Open Rate, or View Rate shows how many of your contacts have viewed your emails. This is a reflection of how good your list segmentation is. It can be a sign your subject lines are engaging enough for people to want to open the email.

3. Click to Recipient Rate

The CTR shows the percentage of people clicking on links across your chosen recipient list, taking into account deliverability and data segmentation. This is a good metric to judge the overall success of data relevance per marketing list.

4. Click to Open Rate

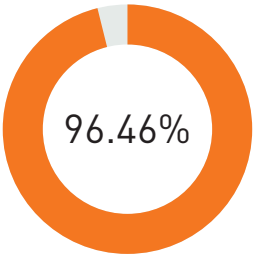
The CTOR shows the percentage of recipients who viewed your email and clicked through to content links. This metric reflects how engaging your content is to the recipient list.

5. Opt out Rates

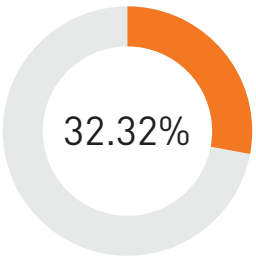
An indication of how healthy your lists are and how engaged your audience is. Low opt-out rates combined with high Click to Open Rates suggest you are reaching the right people with the right content. However, low opt-out rates with low Open Rates or Click Through rates could indicate you are not engaging or connecting with your audience.

This report looks at how Professional Services email campaigns performed in 2017 and highlights the difference in results for different sectors. What's working, what are the trends? What adjustments or changes can you make to maximise engagement from your campaigns in 2018?

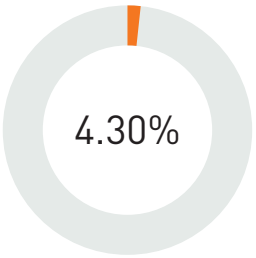
2017 performance metrics



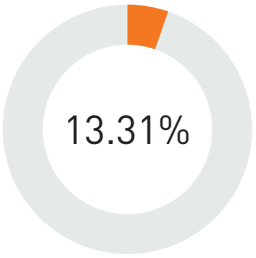
Average Deliverability



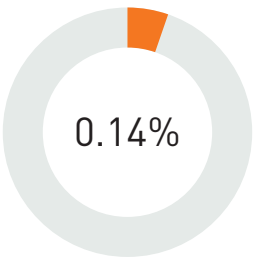
Average Open Rate



Average Click To Recipient Rate



Click To Open Rates



Opt Out Rates

Professional Services email marketing performance 2017: How do you compare?

2017 saw a healthy number of emails reaching the recipient's inbox with average deliverability reaching 96.46%. Firms are spending time cleaning data and verifying emails when contacts sign up to emails and using the double-opt ins to verify email addresses. To keep improving inbox placement, email marketers should continue to investigate why an email has bounced and to know what kind of action to take in response. Are you implementing every available strategy to improve inbox placement?

In contrast to the high deliverability rate, Open Rates for 2017 show that on average, 32.32% of emails are opened – that means two thirds of emails sent in a campaign do not get opened by the recipient. Check the frequency of your emails to ensure you are not sending too many to an individual contact in a short space of time. Have you experimented with personalising the subject line or the sender details on display? tailored inbox content can improve Open Rates for your particular audience? Are you using A/B testing to optimise Open Rates?

Content takes time and effort to create. With only four out of every hundred recipients who open the email engaging with content, this is an area that email marketers need to perhaps address with the wider team. Are you creating content that resonates with your particular audience? Is it useful, engaging or helpful to them? Email marketers need to think creatively about how they are building their templates, the frequency with which they are sending their emails and even revise their list segmentation. Are you asking clients what kind of content they want to receive and building your content strategy around their response? More importantly, how are you tracking and following up with contacts who are clicking, consuming content and engaging? Or is your data sitting outside the reach of the relationship holder?

In general, Professional Services are still enjoying low levels of Opt-outs (0.14%) but these must be seen in combination with an engagement metric. If emails are not being opened, contacts are not engaging with your content and and opt-outs are not moving, you have a problem. Opt-outs are not necessarily a bad thing – they help ensure you only send content to recipients who want to receive it. Too many opt outs? It may be time to revise your list segmentation and ensure your content is relevant to that audience. Consider including a 'reason for opt-out' form that will give you insight as to why your contacts are opting out and then make the necessary changes.

However your metrics compare to the averages for 2017, in a competitive environment where each relationship drives client loyalty and advocacy and new business, it is worth taking up the challenge to see how far you can improve on your metrics by understanding what it is your clients really want and delivering it.

Architecture, Engineering & Construction

2016		2017
96.81%	AVERAGE DELIVERABILITY	97.57%
40.18%	OPEN RATE	47.77%
5.25%	AVERAGE CLICK RATE	3.47%
13.16%	AVERAGE CLICK TO OPEN RATE	7.26%
0.19%	AVERAGE OPT OUT	0.10%

What's the trend?

There is a fractional improvement in the percentage of emails reaching the inbox. Also positive is a healthy 7% increase in Open Rate. This is not reflected in the click rates which have dropped by 1.8%. The biggest fall however is in email engagement - a 50% drop, down almost 6%. These results suggest that marketers in this sector should be investing in creating content that is more engaging and relevant to their audience. The opportunity is there for the taking as low Opt out Rates may suggest there is still willingness on the part of contacts to receive content.

Consulting

2016		2017
93.13%	AVERAGE DELIVERABILITY	96.73%
35.06%	OPEN RATE	40.31%
3.91%	AVERAGE CLICK RATE	4.66%
11.17%	AVERAGE CLICK TO OPEN RATE	11.56%
0.34%	AVERAGE OPT OUT	0.11%

What's the trend?

Overall a good all-round improvement in performance metrics for email campaigns in the Consulting sector. More emails are reaching the inbox and, more importantly, are being opened – up to a 5% increase. However, engagement metrics have not followed this trend and while not slipping back – they increased 0.4% - marketers in the Consulting business should be looking at ways to capitalise on their increase in Open Rate and ensure that their content is engaging and relevant.

Financial Services

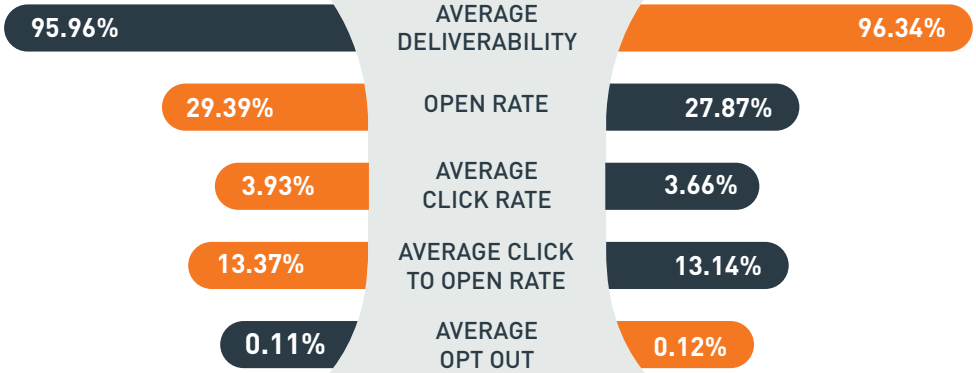
2016		2017
97.17%	AVERAGE DELIVERABILITY	97.07%
42.60%	OPEN RATE	47.17%
5.19%	AVERAGE CLICK RATE	6.98%
12.19%	AVERAGE CLICK TO OPEN RATE	14.80%
0.14%	AVERAGE OPT OUT	0.12%

What's the trend?

Metrics in campaigns sent by Financial Services firms show a fractional drop in deliverability rates but still coming in the highest of all the sectors at 97.07%. Open Rates too have improved 4.57%, which is good news particularly as Click Rates have increased by 1.8%

With average Click to Open Rates just falling short of 15%, up 2.6% from last year and consistently low opt rates Financial Services firms can only beat their own best and make the most of the fact that clients seem engaged and willing to receive emails.

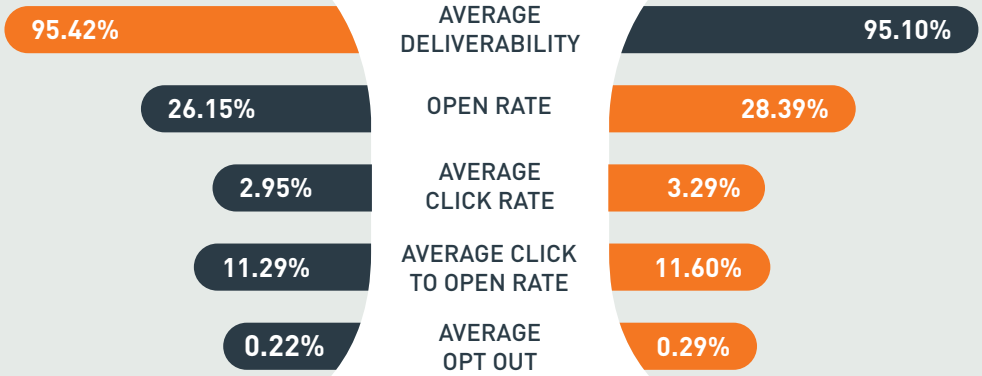
Legal



What's the trend?

It's reassuring to see a fractional upward trend (0.38%) in delivery on what was already a good Delivery Rate. However, this unfortunately does not translate into improved open rates which are down by 1.52% in what is already a lower-than-average open rate for professional services. Legal marketers need to look at how they are segmenting their lists and create subject headlines that deliver on their promise. It is encouraging to see that engagement from those who do click to open has not dipped too much, (0.23%) and combined with low Opt out Rates, there is an opportunity to improve overall campaign performance.

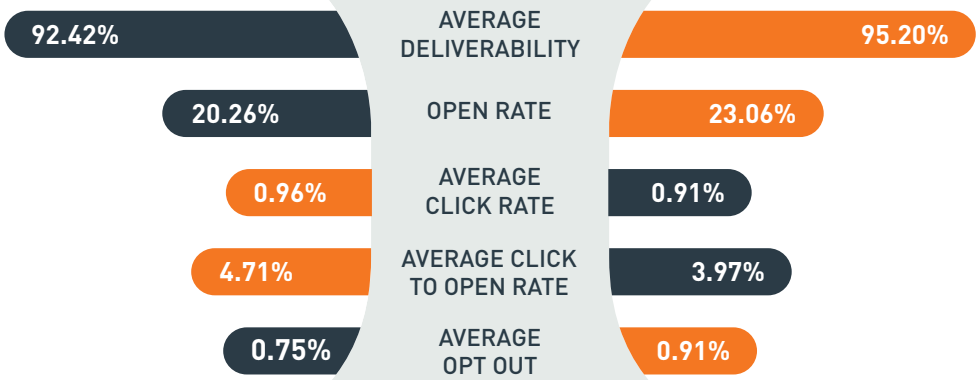
Real Estate



What's the trend?

The good news story here is that average Open Rates are up by 2.24% despite a fractional drop in deliverability (0.3%) Also positive is that recipients are clicking at a similar rate to 2016 (up 0.3%) consistent – albeit fractional – with the Click to Open Rate. Opt out Rates are similar to 2016. However, compared to the campaign performance of other sectors, there is still room for Real Estate to look to improving both open rates and engagement.

Other Professional Services



What's the trend?

Comparatively speaking, 'Other Professional Services' including recruitment, marketing and tech, have had the best improvement in deliverability showing a 2.8% increase. This upward trend is followed closely by the Open Rate – also 2.8%. Click rates have not really shifted since 2016 (0.05%) and engagement measured by Click to Open is down by 0.75%. It looks like recipients still seem happy to to receive content with just 0.2% more choosing to opt out of emails. Although this is still higher than most of the other sectors included here there is still an opportunity for these firms to refine list segmentation, review subject lines and create engaging content.

Who get's Concep Gold?



Insights into the best practices in the sector to help you set your goals for 2018.

Best Deliverability Rates in 2017
Architecture, Engineering and Construction
With 97.5% and an upward trend

Best Open Rate in 2017
Architecture, Engineering and Construction
With 47.8% and an upward trend

Best Click Rate in 2017
Financial Services
With 7%, and an upward trend

Best Click to Open Rate in 2017
Financial Services
With 14.8% and rising

Lowest Opt out Rates
Consulting
0.11% combined with good Click to Open Rates

Your sector at a glance

Concep clients sent 7 percent more emails in 2017 than they did in 2016 cementing email communication as the preferred channel that is definitely here to stay.

The good news is that contacts across all sectors in professional services are still willing to receive communication by email from B2B firms. Smart firms who can respond to their contacts' preferences and find the format and frequency that works for them as well as create engaging content will see highest ROI on their email marketing efforts. From what we are seeing the difference lies in the degree of email marketing maturity for each sector.

With many of the **consulting sectors'** clients focused on digital transformation, simplifying the customer experience and improving engagement, it was only time before the client-driven Consulting sector ensured their email marketing strategies moved ahead. Marketers in this highly competitive sector know that they need to communicate with clients in ways that both position and differentiate their offering. With no shortage of thought-leadership, client case studies and content to distribute, there is still room for consulting marketers to find ways to increase client engagement so that their Click to Open Rates come in closer to their 5% increase in Open Rates.



Last year saw unprecedented levels of regulation and compliance coming into force in the **financial services** sector. With most to gain from building trusting relationships, it is encouraging to see that financial services had the best improvement in engagement metrics; Click to Open Rates reached nearly 15% outperforming all the other professional services sectors. New technologies and a mindset to 'get it right' as well as new digital marketing talent can only help this sector to keep getting better and grow stronger B2B relationships.



With less mature processes and technologies than their peers in consulting and financial services, '**Architecture, Engineering and Construction**' (AEC) firms have demonstrated the most polarised campaign results out of all the sectors, taking the gold for deliverability and Open Rates, which are up 7%, but losing out on their engagement metrics. A 50% downslide suggests their content may not be resonating with their clients. At Concep we are seeing an increasing number of AEC firms make the investment in new technology and marketing talent, however it is evident they need to focus on understanding what communication and content their clients want to receive and the best time and format to deliver it to them.



Real Estate firms have shown a good improvement in Open Rates with their 2.24% uplift. Stronger, more robust processes suggest they are starting to segment and clean their data more effectively and this is reflected in the slight rise in their Open Rates. As a sector that is subject to a volatile and uncertain marketplace, the need for building strong B2B relationships is becoming increasingly urgent. They will need to have the right people, with the right skills using the right technology to understand what their clients want.



Legal firms belong to a change-resistant sector and the benchmark metrics reflect they have made little progress in their email marketing performance. They are the only sector to have slightly lower results in their campaign metrics in 2017 compared to 2016. With the sector undergoing pressure from specialist procurement practices and clients requiring micro-niche cross-sector solutions, legal marketers need to be closer than ever to understanding client communication and responding. As clients become more demanding, they will also need to generate insights that help them become smarter at selling and cross-selling and leveraging business relationships more effectively. That starts with good communication and engagement.



Our final sector is "**Other Professionals**" consisting of marketing, tech, sales and recruitment firms - all of which have seen unprecedented levels of digital disruption in recent years and different levels of email marketing maturity. In many cases, communication with prospects and clients is still conducted outside of a CRM platform. With fierce competition and a need for brand differentiation, marketing teams in this sector are recognising the need to make their processes more streamlined and efficient. This starts by getting their house in order with regards to data and data management. In 2017 this sector improved deliverability and email Open Rates by 2.8%. There is still work to be done to ensure they are engaging and delivering the content their contact's want to receive.

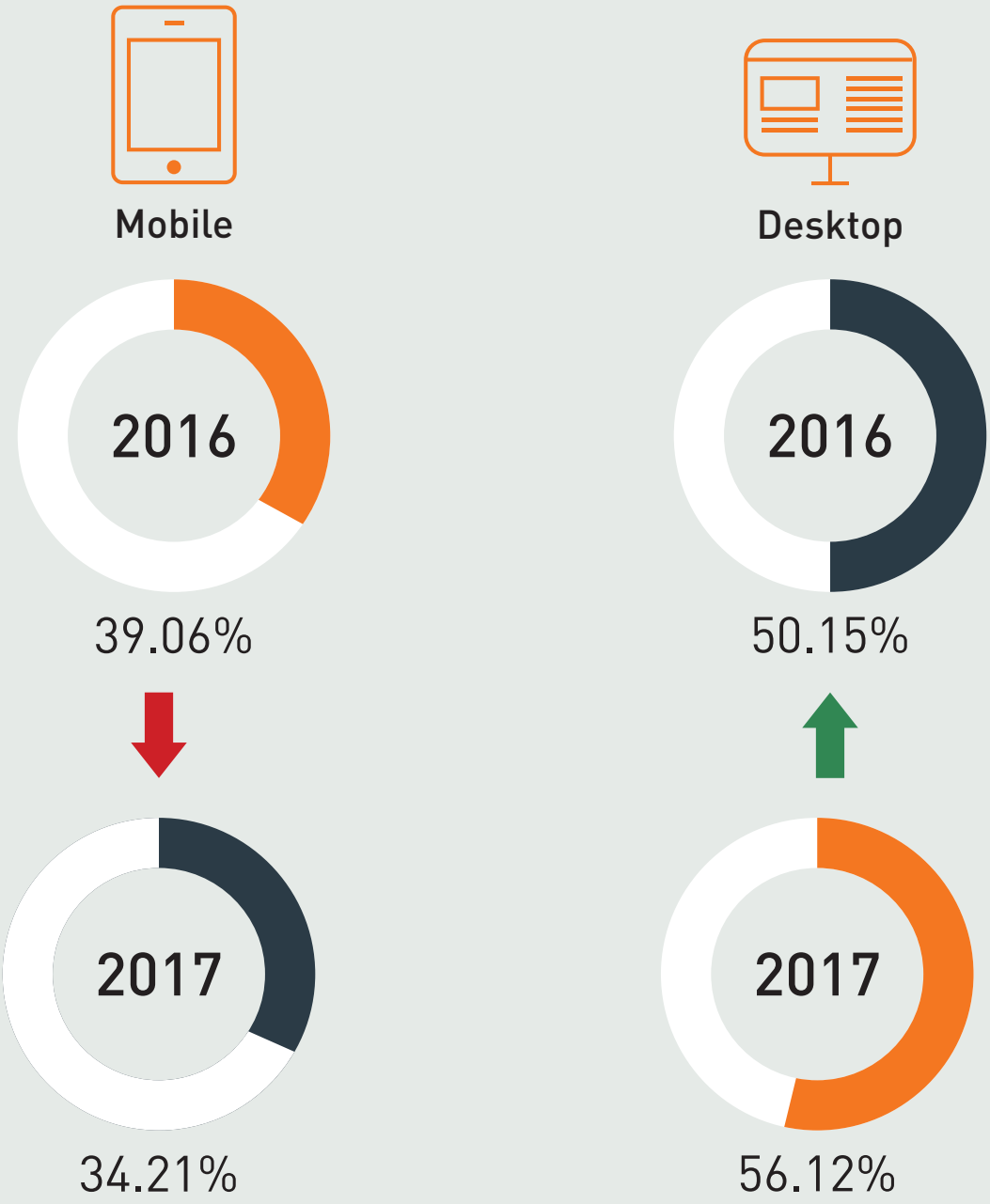


These results seem to reflect that those sectors that are being driven by external factors and who are open to change are maturing faster in their email marketing and enjoying better email performance than their peers.

What measures have you got in place to evaluate how mature your email communications are? What strategies will you implement in 2018 to ensure you do not get left behind?

Mobile First? Think Twice

Across all our client campaigns in 2017 there was a surprising increase of 6% in emails viewed on a desktop compared to mobile. Whatever the reason for this, it is a reminder for marketers not to forget desktop users when they design the email reading experience and that content including images and video needs to look great on a bigger screen too.



Is the weekend the new Tuesday?

Past research has always told us that Tuesday is the go-to day of the week to send out email campaigns. Our 2017 statistics show that times are changing. With more people working 'anyplace, anytime' and the rise of mobile, work/life boundaries have definitely shifted.

Open Rates range between 32.1% and 34.8% and spread across the week with the top open rates falling on Saturday (34.8%) and Sunday (33.26%).

Weekend engagement, a missed opportunity?

Our client's contacts were not just checking their inbox at the weekend. CTO reached 18% on Saturdays, 6% higher than on weekdays. With less than 2% of B2B emails sent at the weekend compared to 20% on weekdays, marketing professionals in these sectors are missing an opportunity to engage.

Monday
32.10%

Tuesday
32.06%

Wednesday
32.10%

Thursday
33.09%

Friday
32.02%

Saturday
34.81%

Sunday
33.26%

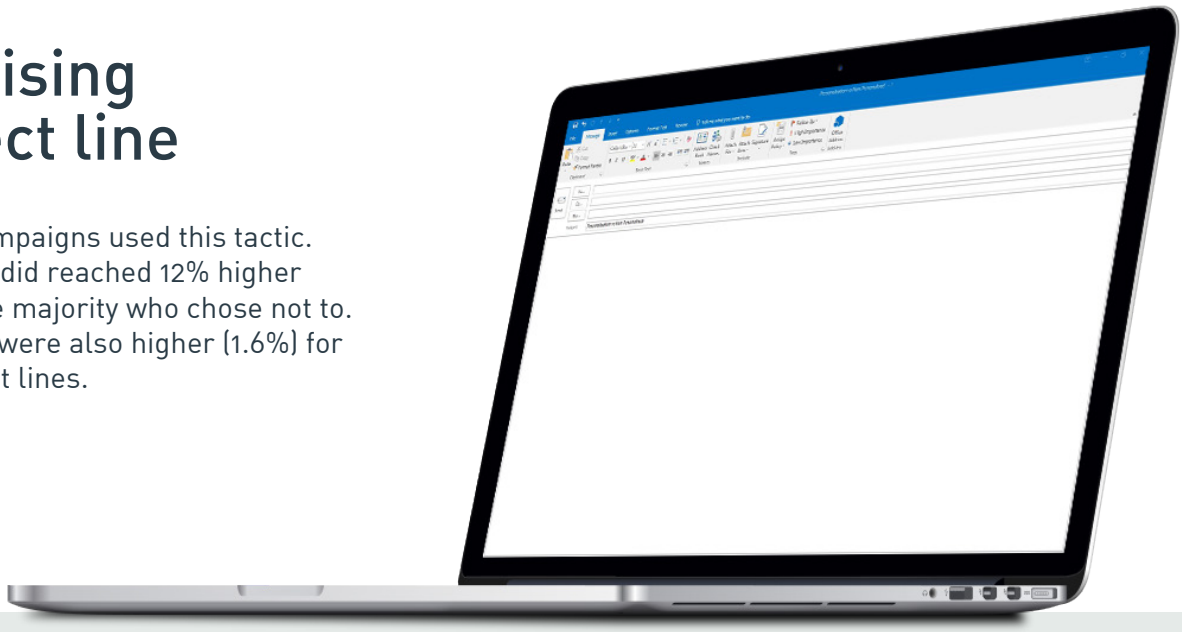
Make it personal

In 2017 many firms in the professional services space were looking at ways to personalise emails to B2B clients. We looked at two personalisation practices:

1. Personalising the subject line
2. Personalising the sender (from) information

Personalising the subject line

Only 1.45% of all campaigns used this tactic. However those that did reached 12% higher Open Rates than the majority who chose not to. Click through rates were also higher (1.6%) for personalised subject lines.



Personalised sender profile

With relationship holders keen to build one-to-one relationships and Concep's decentralised marketing solution making it easy to personalise sender information, it was surprising to see only 1.45% of all campaigns sent in 2017 used a personalised sender profile in their emails. Open Rates were just over 3 percent higher (3.2%).

In our view, it is worth experimenting with personalisation and tracking the results to see how it affects your campaigns.

Subject Matters

When you are competing for attention in your client's inbox, a great subject line is crucial. It is the #1 tactic that will boost your Open Rate metrics. In 2017 we saw our clients experiment with a range of formats and tactics to encourage contacts to click open and engage.

In addition to adding personalised data to the subject line, there are three tactics that drew our attention:

1. To question or not to question?

Using a question in the subject line to draw in the recipient is a commonly used technique. However only 3.2% of all campaigns sent via Concep in 2017 used a question format in the subject line. But was it effective?

Our data showed that using an affirmative statement rather than a question gives better results - almost 5% more email opens (4.62%) and one percent higher Click Through Rates.



2. Put in a Pipe I One way to format your emails

A less common device marketers used in 2017 to format subject lines is the use of a vertical line or "pipe", for example:

Practice Area I March Newsletter I Read our top story

More than 12% of campaigns in 2017 used this formatting technique, particularly in legal and consulting firms. However subject lines without a pipe performed better than those that did when it comes to Open Rates (7.45%) although this did not affect the Click Through Rate. Click to Open rates though, were 3% higher in those emails that did contain a pipe suggesting that the content in the emails was relevant and useful to the recipient.



3. Less is More

Data from 2017 shows that subject lines that are concise give better results, with 54 characters being the magic number – including spaces. That's about 8-12 words. With recipients being able to read two-thirds or less of the subject line before they open the email you need to make it count. Include your trigger words within the first half of the subject line.

Use A/B testing to see what works best for your audience, learn, and apply next time round.

With email communication still the top channel for B2B relationships in 2018, it makes business sense to invest time in doing it well.

Top Tips for Smart firms...

Don't become complacent –it can be a slippery slope.

Make sure your data and email lists are clean and compliant.

Look at sector best practice and use A/B testing to see what works for you.

Set your goals a little higher for each campaign.

Keep challenging assumptions – human behaviour is never consistent.

Keep learning – use the Concep Knowledge base to make sure you are getting the most out of the platform and your campaign performance.

Look beyond the numbers - use your metrics to tell a story about engagement and growth.

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For more information about Concep's B2B relationship marketing solution visit www.concep.com