

Email Marketing Performance in 2017

Executive perspective on the strategy and effectiveness of email marketing



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Introduction

After 45 years, email is still a critical channel for marketers. In 2017, there are over [3.7 billion email users](#)—representing more than half the world’s population. In addition to its reach, email is consistently rated as [consumers’ preferred channel](#) for brand communication.

Email offers a lot of value as a channel, yet it also requires significant effort from businesses to realize its full potential. To find out how the email channel is performing, Return Path, in partnership with Ascend2, fielded a survey of 88 B2B and B2C business leaders and marketing decision makers to get their perspective on the state of email.

In this report—*Email Marketing Performance*—we share the opinions of these executives on topics including:

- The most important objectives of an email marketing program
- The most useful metrics for measuring performance
- The most effective email marketing tactics for reaching objectives
- And more!

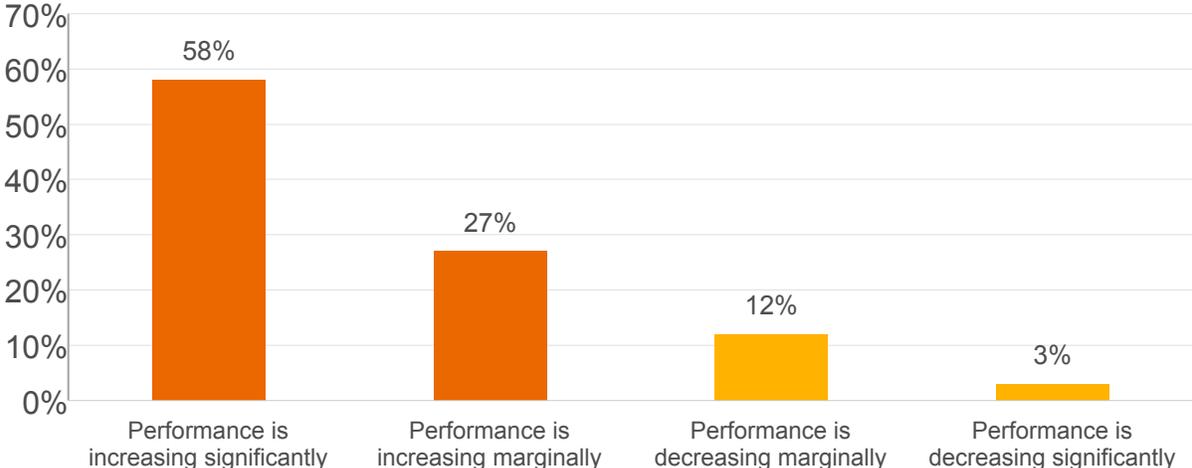
Feel free to put this research to work in your own marketing strategy. The charts may be used in your blogs or shared on social media, but please be sure to include the proper research credit.



The state of email marketing performance

Executives in this study are extremely confident in the performance of email marketing. A full 85 percent say that email marketing performance is increasing, with two-thirds of those describing the increase as significant.

Which best describes the state of email marketing performance today?



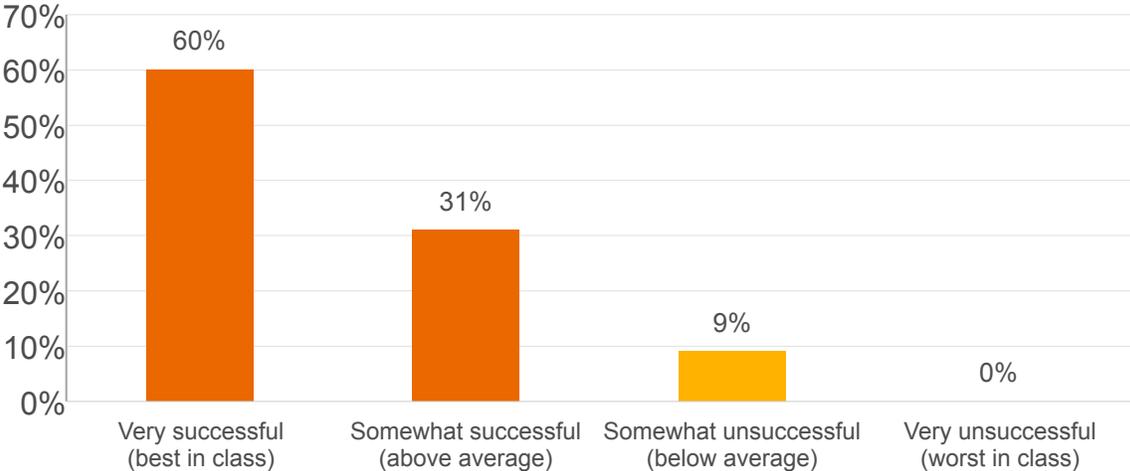
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Successfully achieving objectives

In addition to its strong performance, email is also viewed as a successful channel for achieving objectives. Over 90 percent of executives surveyed believe their email marketing strategy is successful in achieving important objectives, with six out of ten describing their success as best in class.

How successful is an email marketing strategy at achieving important objectives?



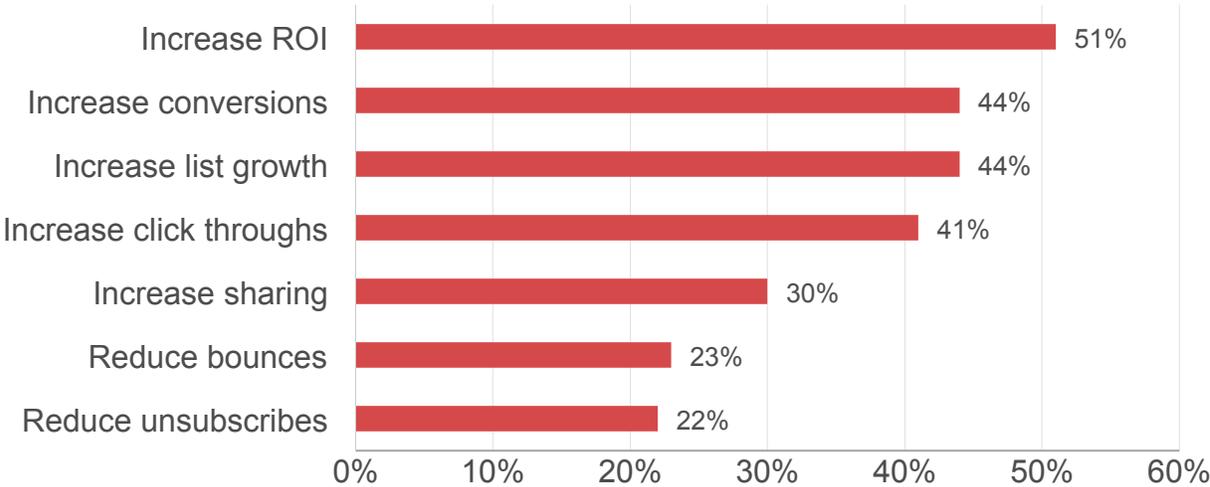
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Most important email marketing objectives

Executives in this study define increasing ROI as their top email marketing objective (51 percent), followed by increasing list growth and conversions (44 percent each).

What are the most important objectives of an email marketing strategy to achieve?



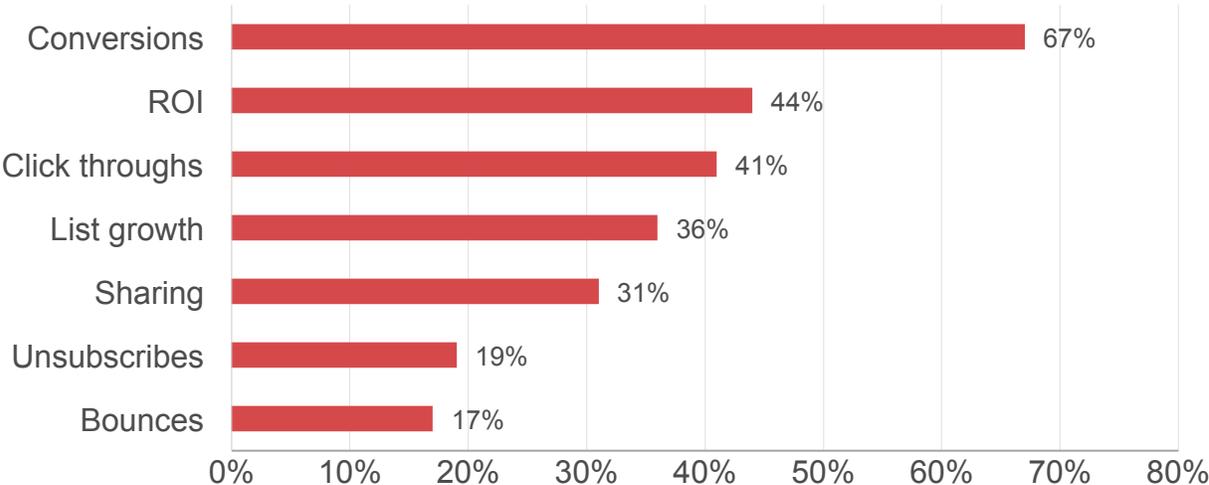
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Most useful performance metrics

Executives rely on various metrics to judge the performance of email marketing and its ability to achieve its objectives. Two-thirds of the executives surveyed believe that conversions are the most useful metric for measuring email marketing performance, followed by ROI (44 percent) and click throughs (41 percent).

What are the most useful metrics for measuring email marketing performance?



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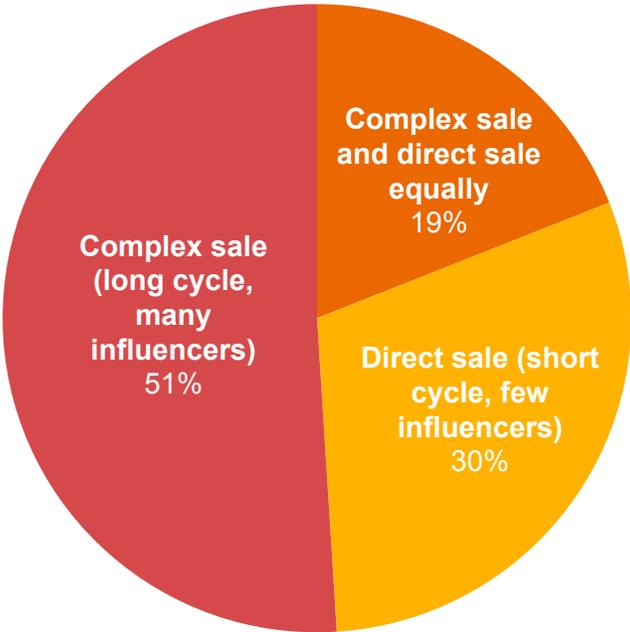


Average sales cycle length

Most executives surveyed (51 percent) state that their business experiences a long sales cycle with multiple interactions before a final sale.

Different sales cycles require different sales tactics. Whether it takes only one contact or a long term multichannel campaign, email can play a key role in achieving a conversion for both long and short sales cycles.

Which best describes the type of sales cycle encountered most often?



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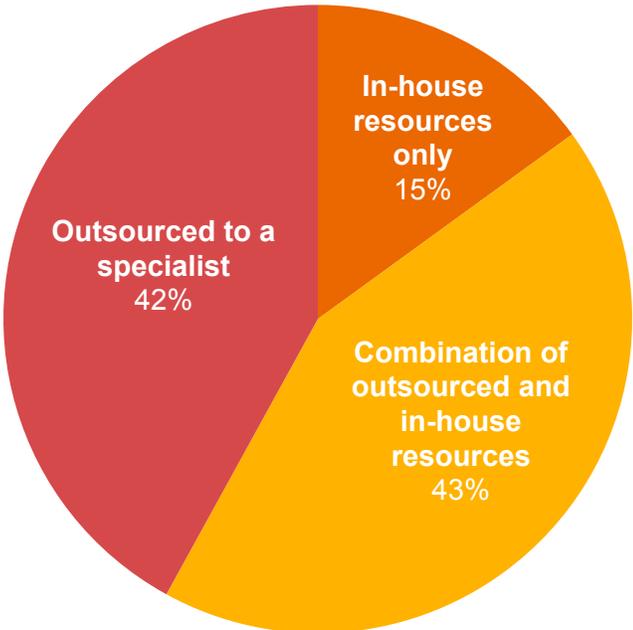


Tactical implementation resources used

The majority (85 percent) of executives in this study outsource all or part of their email marketing, with 43 percent stating that a collaboration of outsourced and in-house resources is the most effective approach.

The access to and effective use of resources has a significant impact on an email program. With the right insights and resources to execute email strategy, marketers are better equipped to achieve their email marketing objectives.

Which best describes the resources used to implement email marketing tactics effectively?



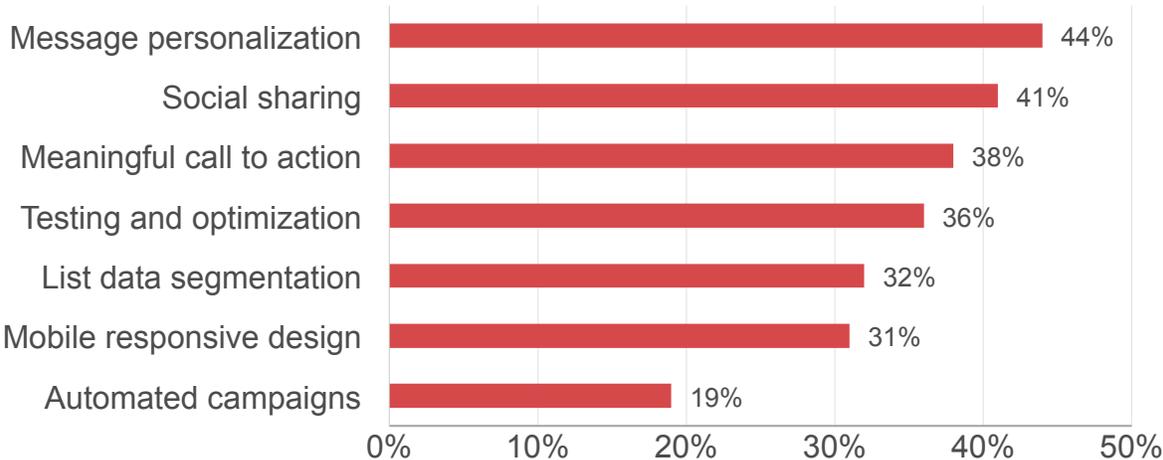
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Most effective email marketing tactics

Message personalization and social sharing are considered the most effective email marketing practices for 44 percent and 41 percent of executives surveyed, respectively.

What are the most effective email marketing tactics used?



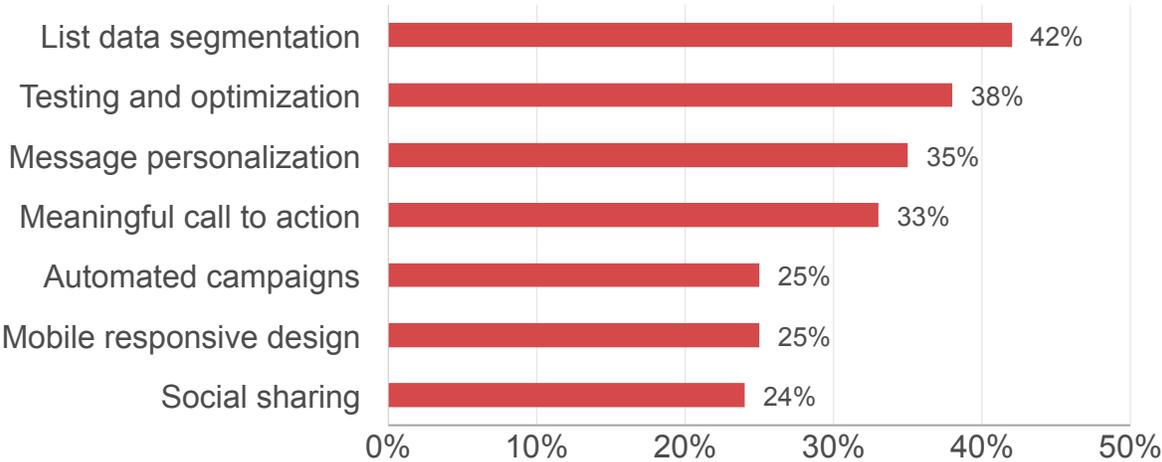
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Most difficult email marketing tactics

List data segmentation (41 percent), testing and optimization (38 percent), and message personalization (35 percent) are viewed as the most difficult email marketing tactics.

What are the most difficult email marketing tactics to implement?



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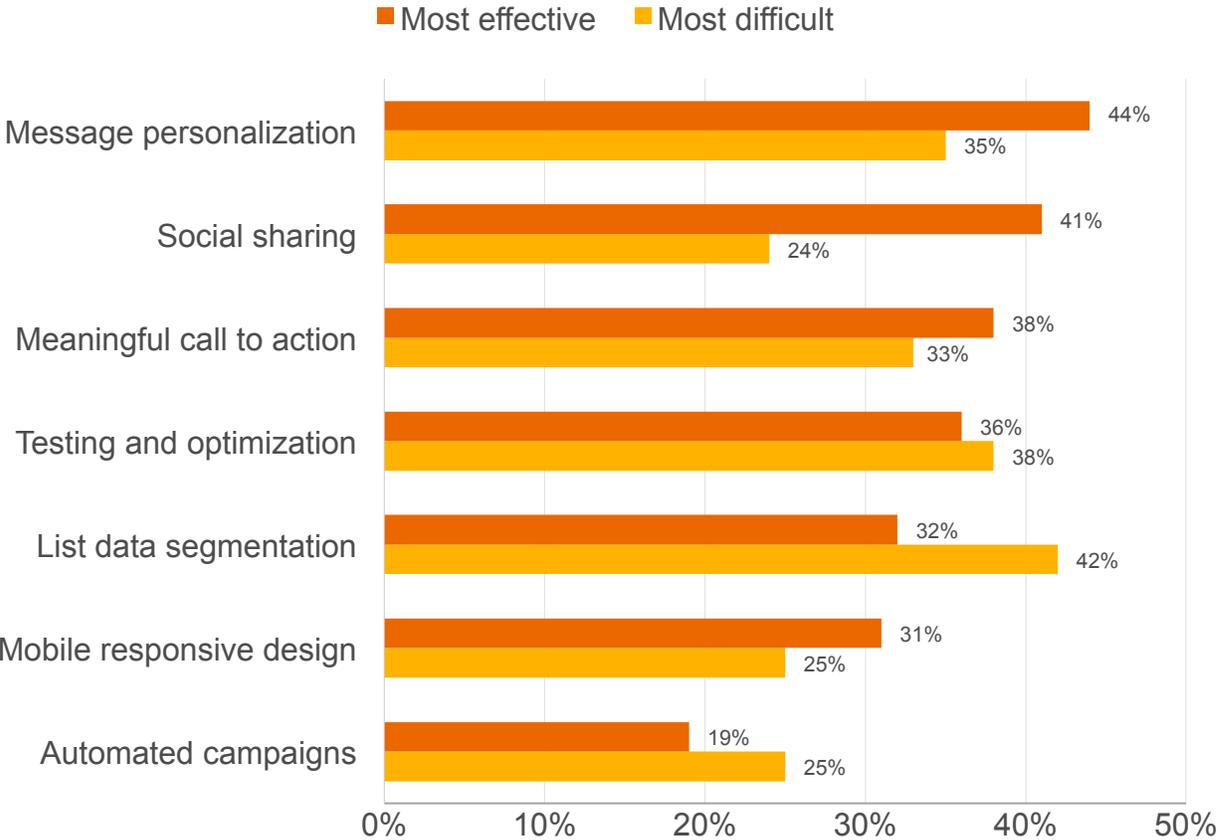
To help ease the burden of testing, Return Path recently introduced a new [Multivariate Testing solution](#), which provides an automated way to test multiple combinations of creative elements, simultaneously. With this solution, marketers can more effectively test their email content and improve subscriber engagement, without the cost and complexity of traditional A/B testing.



Comparing tactical effectiveness and difficulty

Message personalization, social sharing, and a meaningful call to action are the only tactics in which effectiveness outweighs the difficulty of implementation, according to the executives surveyed.

Tactical effectiveness versus difficulty



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Fully optimizing the email channel

Email is the most important tool marketers have. But unfortunately, nothing good is ever easy.

Each year, the challenges marketers face become incrementally more sophisticated and complex. From constantly evolving spam filters to changing consumer expectations, marketers struggle to find solutions to address these issues. And in many cases, the tactics marketers are using are proving more difficult than they are effective.

But in a mature industry like email marketing, the chances of finding a “silver bullet” that solves every marketing challenge are slim. Instead, real improvement comes through subtle changes to optimize each campaign, and incremental adjustments to the tactics marketers are already using.

Most marketers already possess the tools they need to be successful—it’s simply a matter of using them in more effective, strategic ways. In our recent ebook, *The Era of Optimization*, we suggest several areas of your email program where you can make a significant impact.

[Download the guide](#) now for specific, actionable advice to take your email program to the next level.



About the research partners



Return Path analyzes the world's largest collection of email data to show businesses how to stay connected to their audiences and strengthen their customer engagement. Our data solutions help analysts understand consumer behavior and market trends. We help mailbox providers and security providers around the world deliver great user experiences and build trust in email by ensuring that wanted messages reach the inbox while spam and abuse don't. Learn more at returnpath.com



Marketing software and data companies, and digital marketing agencies partner with Ascend2 to reliably generate demand and supplement marketing content. Our Research Partner Programs are transparent—spotlighting your brand and the interests of your market. Learn more at Ascend2.com

Methodology

Ascend2 benchmarks the performance of popular digital marketing practices using a standardized questionnaire and proprietary 3-Minute Survey format.

This survey was conducted online from a panel of 88 marketing influencers. This report represents the following participants:

Primary Marketing Channel

Business-to-Business	60%
Business-to-Consumer	22%
B2B and B2C Equally	18%

Number of employees

More than 500	33%
50 to 500	34%
Fewer than 50	33%

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