



2012
Silverpop Email
Marketing Metrics
Benchmark
Study



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2012 SILVERPOP EMAIL MARKETING METRICS BENCHMARK STUDY

What's the average open rate? How many clicks do the best companies get? And how are our email programs performing against our peers? These are some of the most commonly asked questions raised by marketers or their bosses.

We believe that the better gauge of marketing success is whether your email program met, exceeded or fell short of the goals set while adding value to the customer or prospect relationship and maximizing conversions and revenue. However, used correctly, benchmark data can provide the marketer with a baseline scorecard to help understand how far you need to travel in your performance-improvement journey.

With this study, Silverpop takes the typical benchmark study to a higher level in three respects:

1. Deeper Perspective in Benchmarks

Here, you'll find the classic list of email marketing benchmarks such as open, click and bounce rates, but with additional computations that deliver a deeper and more accurate picture of reader engagement and action on your email messages.

These include unique and gross open rates, number of opens per opener, the click-to-open rate, clicks per clicker, email message size, and complaint and unsubscribe rates.

And we'll also slice the data up by industry verticals.

2. International Comparison

Most benchmark studies are conducted from a U.S./single-country-centric viewpoint, but we wanted to see if metrics vary among different countries.

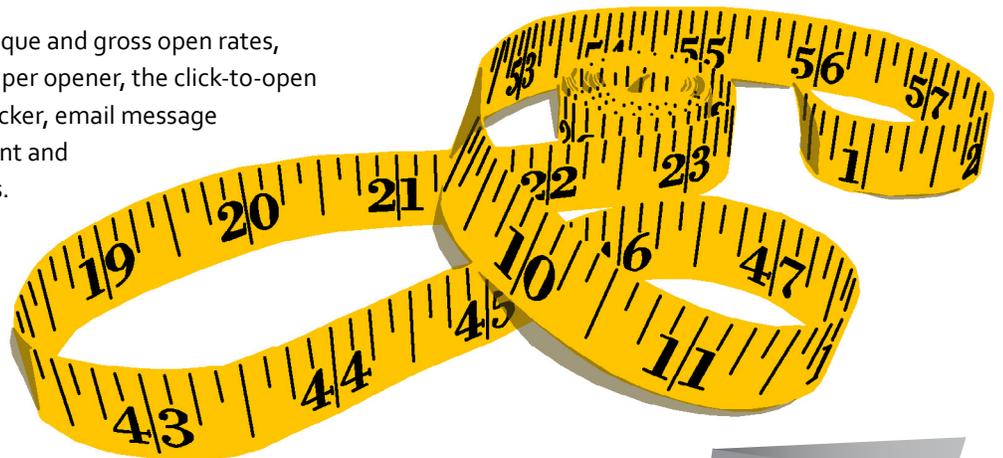
Thus, we first report overall statistics and then break down those statistics by three major countries/regions: United States, Canada and EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa).

3. Benchmarks Beyond "Average"

Benchmarking your progress against your competitors is a necessary step when analyzing your email program's health, but you have to select the correct benchmarks.

Most studies report "average" benchmarks, but in our view, being average is no longer enough. In today's hypercompetitive marketplace, "average" has become the new bottom.

Instead, we hope to encourage you to set your sights higher. If you want to be a world-class marketing organization, compare yourself to those who are doing the best on the benchmarks that are most important to you.



Thus, we present the average benchmark, median, and top- and bottom-performing quartile for each benchmark. Although averages are the most common form of reporting statistics, in many cases the median offers a more precise interpretation. At the end of this report, you'll find an appendix with more resources, including an explanation of the methodology, definitions of the terms used in this study, and links to white papers and tip sheets you can use to help improve your marketing performance.

Next Step: Benchmark Against Yourself

This study presents a variety of key performance benchmarks among email messages sent to recipients around the world. However, this should be just the beginning for you.

One note to apply with this report: The metrics we examine are all what we call "process"

metrics, which measure activity on email messages. These are important measurements that help drive improvements in areas such as creative, deliverability and list hygiene.

However, knowing your open rate exceeds the industry average, even placing your messages among the top-performing email marketers, doesn't necessarily mean you're meeting your most important business goals.

Understanding where your email program stands on process metrics is one half of the benchmarking equation. The other, and arguably more important half, is using "output" metrics, such as revenue, leads generated, cost savings, order size or number of downloads, which measure how well your email campaign delivered against your individual company's business goals.

STUDY FINDINGS

OPEN RATES

Overview

The open rate (both unique and gross, or total) can be calculated in multiple ways. For this study, we calculated the open rate as the number of measured opened messages — including emails in which images were enabled, as well as "implied opens" on text messages that recorded a click on a link or an HTML message whose viewer didn't enable images but clicked on a link — divided by the number of delivered messages.

"Opens per opener" is a lesser-known but illustrative metric, which is calculated by dividing the total or gross measured opens by the number of unique opens. In simplest terms, it measures how many times a recipient (or recipients, when the message is forwarded) opens the same message. As above, this would also include "implied" opens.

Unique Open Rate (by Country/Region)

| Open Rate (Unique) | Mean | Median | Top Quartile | Bottom Quartile |
|--------------------|-------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Overall | 20.1% | 15.0% | 43.7% | 8.0% |
| U.S. | 19.9% | 14.7% | 44.1% | 7.8% |
| EMEA | 20.9% | 15.4% | 44.2% | 8.3% |
| Canada | 20.7% | 16.4% | 40.5% | 8.5% |



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So, what's the average unique open rate?

According to Silverpop's benchmark study of more than 1,100 brands, it's 20.1%.

Unique Open Rate (by Industry)

| Open Rate (Unique) | Average | Median | Top Quartile | Bottom Quartile |
|------------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Nonprofits | 21.2% | 17.1% | 31.9% | 13.4% |
| Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics | 16.5% | 12.2% | 31.9% | 8.5% |
| Computer Software | 24.7% | 14.8% | 55.0% | 9.5% |
| Consumer Products | 19.4% | 14.7% | 34.9% | 8.7% |
| Consumer Services | 22.4% | 17.6% | 44.8% | 10.4% |
| Education | 15.0% | 10.7% | 30.5% | 6.1% |
| Financial Services | 22.6% | 16.4% | 48.9% | 7.3% |
| Healthcare | 15.2% | 14.7% | 23.6% | 6.1% |
| Travel & Leisure | 16.2% | 13.2% | 32.6% | 4.9% |
| Media & Publishing | 20.9% | 14.9% | 48.0% | 7.3% |
| Real Estate & Construction | 19.7% | 19.6% | 30.5% | 10.5% |
| Retail | 17.1% | 14.6% | 30.6% | 9.0% |

Gross Open Rate (by Country/Region)

| Open Rate (Gross) | Average | Median | Top Quartile | Bottom Quartile |
|-------------------|---------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Overall | 44.9% | 23.0% | 128.7% | 11.4% |
| U.S. | 45.1% | 22.4% | 133.1% | 11.1% |
| EMEA | 44.0% | 23.4% | 105.1% | 11.7% |
| Canada | 44.7% | 24.9% | 111.6% | 12.9% |

Gross Open Rate (by Industry)

| Open Rate (Gross) | Average | Median | Top Quartile | Bottom Quartile |
|------------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Nonprofits | 52.2% | 28.3% | 107.7% | 19.1% |
| Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics | 34.3% | 22.0% | 78.9% | 13.0% |
| Computer Software | 47.3% | 23.7% | 115.9% | 14.2% |
| Consumer Products | 40.6% | 21.4% | 94.2% | 11.8% |
| Consumer Services | 43.8% | 29.4% | 102.1% | 15.5% |
| Education | 25.6% | 15.8% | 59.1% | 8.6% |
| Financial Services | 55.6% | 28.3% | 151.2% | 11.2% |
| Healthcare | 33.7% | 28.0% | 72.8% | 8.7% |
| Travel & Leisure | 48.4% | 17.9% | 146.8% | 6.2% |
| Media & Publishing | 34.0% | 21.8% | 84.4% | 9.9% |
| Real Estate & Construction | 47.6% | 37.5% | 92.7% | 17.7% |
| Retail | 30.7% | 20.3% | 69.5% | 12.6% |

Opens per Opener (by Country/Region)

| Opens per Opener | Average | Median | Top Quartile | Bottom Quartile |
|------------------|---------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Overall | 1.79 | 1.51 | 2.97 | 1.28 |
| U.S. | 1.79 | 1.50 | 3.04 | 1.27 |
| EMEA | 1.71 | 1.52 | 2.54 | 1.27 |
| Canada | 1.88 | 1.59 | 2.96 | 1.39 |

Opens per Opener (by Industry)

| Opens Per Opener | Average | Median | Top Quartile | Bottom Quartile |
|------------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Nonprofits | 1.94 | 1.59 | 2.78 | 1.41 |
| Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics | 1.78 | 1.71 | 2.26 | 1.43 |
| Computer Software | 1.76 | 1.61 | 2.36 | 1.39 |
| Consumer Products | 1.84 | 1.50 | 2.98 | 1.32 |
| Consumer Services | 1.85 | 1.58 | 2.92 | 1.37 |
| Education | 1.55 | 1.49 | 1.87 | 1.32 |
| Financial Services | 2.04 | 1.62 | 3.57 | 1.34 |
| Healthcare | 1.84 | 1.64 | 3.10 | 1.02 |
| Travel & Leisure | 1.84 | 1.40 | 3.24 | 1.24 |
| Media & Publishing | 1.54 | 1.42 | 2.13 | 1.20 |
| Real Estate & Construction | 2.62 | 1.64 | 5.36 | 1.45 |
| Retail | 1.62 | 1.42 | 2.33 | 1.31 |

Observations

While average and median open rates are fairly close across-the-board, top-quartile performers achieved open rates nearly triple the median and more than five times higher than bottom-quartile performers. Disparities among the different results for the gross open rate are even greater, with top performers achieving rates 10 times higher than low performers.

Across industry verticals, the "Computer Software" segment notched the best unique open rates, averaging nearly 25 percent, with top-quartile performers more than doubling that figure.

Regarding the opens per opener rate, several factors can drive multiple opens:

- **Use of multiple devices:** It has become common for email users to scan or "triage" their emails on a mobile device and then view and

act on the emails later on their desktop or laptop computers. If images were enabled (or links clicked with images blocked/disabled) across devices, then an open would be captured at each access point.

- **Relevance/depth of content:** Emails that are long, include offer deadlines or are otherwise relevant and have a "shelf life" may be more likely to be opened a second time (or more).
- **Viral sharing:** When your subscribers forward your email using the "forward" link or button in their email software clients instead of your forward-to-a-friend link, subsequent opens by others would be associated with the original recipient.

Top-quartile performers averaged 66 percent more opens per opener than average. Bottom-quartile performers averaged only slightly more than 1 per open per opener – less than half the figure posted by top-quartile performers.

Looking at industry verticals, there were two that averaged more than 2 opens per opener on average—“Financial Services” and “Real Estate & Construction.”

Because the open rate doesn't accurately capture all opens due to image blocking and other factors, it can actually underreport the number

of recipients who view your message. This uncertainty underscores the importance of not over-relying on the open rate as a key measure of subscriber engagement. It does have good value as an in-house benchmark that you can use to establish trends and diagnose issues with your email program.

CLICK-THROUGH RATES

Overview

The click-through rate (CTR) is the number of unique clicks on links in the email message divided by the number of delivered email messages in a campaign. The click-to-open rate (CTOR), also known as the effective rate, is the ratio of unique clicks as a percentage of unique opens. It measures click-through rates

as a percentage of messages opened, instead of messages delivered. Clicks per clicker, as with opens per opener, measures how often a recipient clicks links in the same message. It captures actions by recipients who either click a specific link multiple times or who click more than one link in the email message.

Click-Through Rate (by Country/Region)

| Click-Through Rate (Unique) | Mean | Median | Top Quartile | Bottom Quartile |
|-----------------------------|------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Overall | 5.2% | 2.3% | 16.6% | 0.7% |
| U.S. | 5.4% | 2.3% | 18.1% | 0.7% |
| EMEA | 5.1% | 2.5% | 14.9% | 0.9% |
| Canada | 3.8% | 2.3% | 9.7% | 0.7% |

Click-Through Rate (by Industry)

| Click-Through Rate (Unique) | Average | Median | Top Quartile | Bottom Quartile |
|------------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Nonprofits | 5.4% | 3.2% | 11.4% | 1.2% |
| Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics | 3.6% | 1.5% | 10.1% | 0.6% |
| Computer Software | 8.6% | 2.1% | 28.7% | 0.6% |
| Consumer Products | 5.1% | 3.2% | 11.9% | 0.7% |
| Consumer Services | 5.7% | 2.4% | 17.3% | 0.8% |
| Education | 3.0% | 1.7% | 7.8% | 0.6% |
| Financial Services | 3.5% | 1.8% | 9.9% | 0.4% |
| Healthcare | 3.1% | 2.5% | 6.8% | 0.6% |
| Travel & Leisure | 2.3% | 1.8% | 5.3% | 0.4% |
| Media & Publishing | 8.9% | 2.5% | 31.7% | 0.7% |
| Real Estate & Construction | 2.9% | 2.1% | 6.0% | 0.9% |
| Retail | 3.1% | 2.4% | 6.2% | 1.3% |



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The only industry to rank in the top 3 verticals in open rate, click-through rate and clicks per clicker?

Computer software.

Click-to-Open Rate (by Country/Region)

| Click-to-Open Rate | Mean | Median | Top Quartile | Bottom Quartile |
|--------------------|-------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Overall | 19.3% | 16.3% | 40.0% | 6.7% |
| U.S. | 19.4% | 16.3% | 41.8% | 6.4% |
| EMEA | 19.8% | 16.5% | 37.3% | 8.1% |
| Canada | 18.4% | 16.7% | 34.3% | 5.8% |

Click-to-Open Rate (by Industry)

| Click-To-Open Rate | Average | Median | Top Quartile | Bottom Quartile |
|------------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Nonprofits | 20.1% | 17.6% | 32.5% | 8.6% |
| Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics | 16.2% | 14.6% | 31.5% | 5.3% |
| Computer Software | 18.1% | 12.7% | 41.4% | 5.2% |
| Consumer Products | 22.8% | 21.6% | 38.6% | 7.7% |
| Consumer Services | 20.5% | 17.4% | 42.4% | 5.8% |
| Education | 16.3% | 15.0% | 25.8% | 9.2% |
| Financial Services | 15.0% | 12.5% | 31.6% | 4.1% |
| Healthcare | 17.1% | 15.8% | 31.6% | 6.0% |
| Travel & Leisure | 16.4% | 14.5% | 27.3% | 6.6% |
| Media & Publishing | 24.2% | 17.8% | 57.4% | 7.1% |
| Real Estate & Construction | 14.6% | 14.1% | 24.0% | 3.1% |
| Retail | 18.1% | 16.8% | 28.2% | 10.2% |

Clicks per Clicker (by Country/Region)

| Clicks per Clicker | Mean | Median | Top Quartile | Bottom Quartile |
|--------------------|------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Overall | 1.56 | 1.46 | 1.82 | 1.34 |
| U.S. | 1.54 | 1.46 | 1.74 | 1.33 |
| EMEA | 1.51 | 1.45 | 1.77 | 1.31 |
| Canada | 1.86 | 1.53 | 2.84 | 1.41 |

Clicks per Clicker (by Industry)

| Clicks per Clicker | Average | Median | Top Quartile | Bottom Quartile |
|------------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Nonprofits | 1.47 | 1.51 | 1.36 | 1.43 |
| Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics | 1.84 | 1.53 | 2.57 | 1.48 |
| Computer Software | 1.95 | 1.58 | 3.07 | 1.46 |
| Consumer Products | 1.50 | 1.47 | 1.31 | 1.41 |
| Consumer Services | 1.65 | 1.47 | 2.25 | 1.37 |
| Education | 1.68 | 1.48 | 1.86 | 1.47 |
| Financial Services | 1.61 | 1.50 | 1.92 | 1.38 |
| Healthcare | 1.66 | 1.60 | 1.99 | 1.06 |
| Travel & Leisure | 1.42 | 1.46 | 1.28 | 1.33 |
| Media & Publishing | 1.49 | 1.45 | 1.74 | 1.23 |
| Real Estate & Construction | 1.65 | 1.53 | 2.04 | 1.43 |
| Retail | 1.45 | 1.40 | 1.54 | 1.37 |

Observations

Across the three click-based metrics, some key findings:

- **Click-Through Rate:** Top-quartile performers tallied click-through rates as high as many companies' open rates and approximately three times the average click-through rate. In contrast, bottom-quartile performers didn't even muster 1 percent click-throughs.

"Computer Software," "Media & Publishing" and "Consumer Services" were the best-performing verticals, both on average and among top-quartile performers. The higher click-through rates may be attributable to these industries typically delivering content lighter on sales-related messaging and heavier on news, information and educational materials.

- **Click-to-Open Rate:** Again, top-quartile performers far surpassed their counterparts, notching click-to-open rates more than double the average and six times higher than bottom performers. Splits among industry verticals were similar to those in the click-through category.
- **Clicks per Clicker:** The difference between high and low performers was less pronounced here than in other categories, but the top quartile still tallied 17 percent more clicks per clicker than average. Looking at verticals, the "Computer Hardware" and "Computer Software" industries performed best, with the latter the only one to top three clicks per clicker.

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Top-quartile companies tally click-through rates three times the average — and as high as many companies' open rates.

MESSAGE SIZE

Overview

As with subject line length, there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution to optimizing message size. Message context, corporate branding, message length and the amount of HTML and images used will determine how large a message your email becomes.

On desktop computers connected to the corporate network, message size is of little consequence — an email of 200KB may load in roughly the same time as a 40KB message. But as more and more recipi-

ents view your messages on smartphones connected to a cell network with only two bars of coverage, optimizing for message size becomes more important.

A recent rule of thumb is to keep email messages in the 50KB range to ensure they load quickly. While many companies send emails of 80KB to 120KB or more with no issues, optimizing message size may become more important as a growing percentage of your subscribers read your emails on mobile devices.

Message Size (by Country/Region)

| Message Size (kilobytes) | Average | Median | "Smallest" Quartile | "Largest" Quartile |
|--------------------------|---------|--------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Overall | 15.0 | 12.4 | 4.5 | 30.5 |
| U.S. | 13.8 | 11.5 | 4.2 | 27.7 |
| EMEA | 20.1 | 16.2 | 5.7 | 41.0 |
| Canada | 16.1 | 15.9 | 3.8 | 30.6 |

Message Size (by Industry)

| Message Size (kilobytes) | Average | Median | "Smallest" Quartile | "Largest" Quartile |
|------------------------------------------|---------|--------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Nonprofits | 25.2 | 18.5 | 6.7 | 64.2 |
| Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics | 13.6 | 14.9 | 4.2 | 21.1 |
| Computer Software | 14.7 | 11.6 | 6.5 | 26.3 |
| Consumer Products | 16.4 | 15.6 | 6.0 | 29.1 |
| Consumer Services | 15.9 | 12.5 | 5.2 | 32.0 |
| Education | 15.4 | 14.0 | 7.0 | 25.6 |
| Financial Services | 14.8 | 12.0 | 4.8 | 31.1 |
| Healthcare | 16.4 | 10.4 | 3.3 | 40.8 |
| Travel & Leisure | 11.6 | 12.0 | 4.5 | 19.5 |
| Media & Publishing | 12.3 | 8.0 | 3.5 | 27.5 |
| Real Estate & Construction | 13.4 | 14.5 | 4.9 | 20.9 |
| Retail | 20.4 | 17.9 | 6.9 | 37.8 |

Observations

The majority of companies in our study are keeping messages below 40KB and on average about 15KB — a good size that should load fairly quickly regardless of viewing platform. Note that for this metric we've labeled the top and bottom quartiles as "Smallest" and

"Largest," since there isn't necessarily an optimal size. However, a message of only a few kilobytes is likely a text-only message and may significantly underperform versus a comparable but HTML-designed message many times larger.

LIST CHURN METRICS

Overview

The unsubscribe rate and abuse (spam) complaint rate measure reader disengagement: Does your email program (or specific messages) match what your subscribers expected when they signed up for your emails?

In general, unsubscribers are telling you that your program has missed the mark or no longer meets their needs, usually due to a lack of relevancy. Or, they want to change email addresses or preferences but see no option but to leave. In contrast, the spam complaint is an immediate red flag. Your subscriber doesn't want your email message and

can't find or doesn't trust your unsubscribe process enough to use it in order to leave the list.

The hard bounce rate measures permanent delivery errors: how many email messages were undelivered because the addresses either don't exist or belong to closed accounts. A high bounce rate indicates problems with accurate data collection at opt-in as well as with email address churn among subscribers.

Each of these rates can be negligible by itself, but when added together over a year of message deliveries, they can cost you a quarter to a half of your list.

Hard Bounce Rates (by Country/Region)

| Hard Bounce Rate | Average | Median | Top Quartile | Bottom Quartile |
|------------------|---------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Overall | 2.1% | 0.6% | 0.1% | 7.3% |
| U.S. | 2.2% | 0.6% | 0.1% | 7.9% |
| EMEA | 1.9% | 0.6% | 0.1% | 6.7% |
| Canada | 1.1% | 0.4% | 0.2% | 3.1% |

Hard Bounce Rates (by Industry)

| Hard Bounce Rate | Average | Median | Top Quartile | Bottom Quartile |
|------------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Nonprofits | 0.7% | 0.4% | 0.2% | 1.5% |
| Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics | 2.0% | 1.2% | 0.3% | 5.1% |
| Computer Software | 1.3% | 0.9% | 0.3% | 3.3% |
| Consumer Products | 4.8% | 1.9% | 0.2% | 16.4% |
| Consumer Services | 1.4% | 0.6% | 0.1% | 4.4% |
| Education | 1.7% | 0.7% | 0.2% | 5.0% |
| Financial Services | 1.7% | 0.7% | 0.2% | 5.6% |
| Healthcare | 3.0% | 0.9% | 0.2% | 7.7% |
| Travel & Leisure | 1.7% | 0.9% | 0.2% | 4.8% |
| Media & Publishing | 2.2% | 0.5% | 0.1% | 8.4% |
| Real Estate & Construction | 0.7% | 0.5% | 0.1% | 2.3% |
| Retail | 1.3% | 0.3% | 0.1% | 4.7% |



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Top companies have hard bounce rates 1/20 the average — the difference between 500 bounces and 10,000 if emailing a list of 500K.

Observations

The bounce rate highlights the difference between email's top performers and its average or bottom performers. Top-performing companies had hard bounce rates one-twentieth that of average performers – which, when mailing to a list of 500,000, would be the difference between 500 hard bounces and 10,000.

This indicates that top performers most likely are more vigilant about verifying email

addresses before adding them to the database and about doing list hygiene to remove undeliverable addresses. The result is that they have to spend a lot less time and money reacquiring them.

Across industries, top-quartile performers were very consistent, with all segments falling in the 0.1 percent to 0.3 percent range.

Unsubscribe Rates (by Country/Region)

| Unsubscribe Rate | Average | Median | Top Quartile | Bottom Quartile |
|------------------|---------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Overall | 0.31% | 0.13% | 0.02% | 1.05% |
| U.S. | 0.27% | 0.13% | 0.02% | 0.83% |
| EMEA | 0.21% | 0.11% | 0.02% | 0.62% |
| Canada | 0.22% | 0.12% | 0.02% | 0.61% |

Unsubscribe Rates (by Industry)

| Unsubscribe Rate | Average | Median | Top Quartile | Bottom Quartile |
|------------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Nonprofits | 0.10% | 0.08% | 0.02% | 0.25% |
| Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics | 0.23% | 0.19% | 0.00% | 0.59% |
| Computer Software | 0.17% | 0.13% | 0.01% | 0.37% |
| Consumer Products | 0.29% | 0.15% | 0.06% | 0.83% |
| Consumer Services | 0.23% | 0.13% | 0.02% | 0.62% |
| Education | 0.19% | 0.14% | 0.05% | 0.39% |
| Financial Services | 0.18% | 0.11% | 0.02% | 0.48% |
| Healthcare | 0.15% | 0.09% | 0.03% | 0.32% |
| Travel & Leisure | 1.64% | 0.15% | 0.07% | 6.77% |
| Media & Publishing | 0.20% | 0.09% | 0.01% | 0.61% |
| Real Estate & Construction | 0.32% | 0.12% | 0.07% | 1.21% |
| Retail | 0.15% | 0.12% | 0.03% | 0.34% |

Observations

As with the open rate, the best use of the unsubscribe rate is by examining it over time for trends. An unsubscribe rate that increases over time, or which remains constant while spam complaints increase, likely signals subscriber discontent.

While even the bottom quartile only sees about a 1 percent unsubscribe rate, that figure is more than three times the average rate and more than 50 times that of the best performers, whose customers rarely unsubscribe (0.02 percent across all regions). If you're sending three emails a week, that difference can



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Unsubscribe rates for bottom-quartile companies are three times the average and 50 times that of top-performing companies.

add up to thousands of subscribers during the course of a year. (Note: Data from companies from regions outside the three highlighted in the chart led to the overall numbers skewing higher – see the “Research Methodology” section.)

Among industry verticals, “Travel & Leisure” was the main outlier, tallying a 1.6 percent

unsubscribe rate compared to less than 0.3 percent for most. This may be attributable to the nature of that industry – people subscribe when researching or booking a vacation, then unsubscribe once the trip is complete.

Complaint Rate (by Country/Region)

| Complaint Rate | Average | Median | Top Quartile | Bottom Quartile |
|----------------|---------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Overall | 0.08% | 0.05% | 0.00% | 0.22% |
| U.S. | 0.09% | 0.05% | 0.00% | 0.24% |
| EMEA | 0.05% | 0.04% | 0.00% | 0.13% |
| Canada | 0.08% | 0.06% | 0.00% | 0.20% |

Complaint Rate (by Industry)

| Complaint Rate | Average | Median | Top Quartile | Bottom Quartile |
|------------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Nonprofits | 0.05% | 0.05% | 0.01% | 0.10% |
| Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics | 0.04% | 0.02% | 0.00% | 0.13% |
| Computer Software | 0.05% | 0.05% | 0.00% | 0.10% |
| Consumer Products | 0.17% | 0.06% | 0.02% | 0.57% |
| Consumer Services | 0.08% | 0.05% | 0.00% | 0.21% |
| Education | 0.08% | 0.06% | 0.01% | 0.18% |
| Financial Services | 0.06% | 0.04% | 0.00% | 0.17% |
| Healthcare | 0.06% | 0.04% | 0.02% | 0.13% |
| Travel & Leisure | 0.09% | 0.08% | 0.03% | 0.16% |
| Media & Publishing | 0.09% | 0.04% | 0.00% | 0.25% |
| Real Estate & Construction | 0.05% | 0.06% | 0.01% | 0.08% |
| Retail | 0.08% | 0.05% | 0.02% | 0.19% |

Observations

While recipient engagement has become increasingly important in inbox delivery, abuse (spam) complaints are still an important factor ISPs consider when deciding whether to deliver your messages to the inbox, route them to the junk/spam folder or even block them entirely.

As a result, minimizing abuse complaints and actively monitoring the number and

percentage of complaints for each mailing remains an important aspect of performance monitoring. While each ISP is different, a rule of thumb is to not exceed one to two complaints per thousand messages.

Across industry and geographic locations, the complaint rates for top-quartile performers are minuscule.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study examined messages sent in 2011 (all four quarters) and the first quarter of 2012 by Silverpop's Engage client base. Researchers looked at all messages sent by 1,124 brands from 20 countries.

A broad set of message types was included in the study — from promotional emails and content-based newsletters to notifications and transactional messages — sent by companies in a variety of industries.

For this study, researchers analyzed various metrics for both the overall category (all 20 sender countries, including the United States, Canada and those in EMEA) and for just the

United States, Canada and EMEA. Because the overall numbers include countries beyond the United States, Canada and EMEA, in some instances the overall average might actually be higher (or lower) than the combined average of the United States, Canada and EMEA.

Reporting the Findings: Each performance chart features statistics that include the average, median, and top and bottom quartiles. The standard statistical definition of quartiles was used for this study. The "top quartile" is calculated by taking the median of all data above the overall median, and "bottom quartile" is the median of all data below the overall data median.

DEFINITIONS FOR TERMS USED IN THIS PAPER

Open: "Open" refers to an HTML email message whose viewing is recorded by a clear 1x1 pixel image. When a message is opened and images are enabled, the image calls the server and the message is then counted as an open. The number of opens counted for this research include both this direct reporting and an "implied open" on text messages that recorded a click on any link in the message or an HTML message whose viewer did not enable images but clicked on a link.

Open Rate (Unique): The unique open rate measures one open per recipient and is expressed as a percentage of the total number of delivered email messages. To calculate the rate, divide the number of unique opens by the total number of delivered emails, and then multiply by 100 to display the percentage.

Total Open Rate: Sometimes called the gross open rate and also expressed as a percentage of total delivered email messages. It measures how many times the email message is opened, either

by the original recipients or by those to whom the original recipient forwards the message by using the "forward" button in the email client instead of a "forward to a friend" link. To calculate, divide the total number of opens by the total number of delivered messages and multiply by 100.

Average Opens per Opener: Expresses the average number of times a recipient opens the message and is calculated by dividing the number of total opens by the number of unique opens.

Click-Through Rate (CTR): Measures the percentage of email messages that drew at least one click. For this study, it is expressed as unique click-through rate, counting only one click per recipient. To calculate the click-through rate, divide the number of unique clicks by the number of delivered messages and multiply by 100.

Click-to-Open Rate (CTOR): Measures the percentage of opened messages that recorded clicks. To calculate, divide the number of unique clicks by the number of opened messages and multiply by 100.



Average Clicks per Clicker: The average number of times a recipient clicks a link in an email message. To calculate, divide total clicks by unique clicks.

Message Size: The actual size of a message measured in kilobytes (KB). Factors affecting message size include the amount of text, HTML coding and images in a message and if multipart format is used (both an HTML and text version within the same message).

Hard Bounce: This study analyzed “hard bounces,” which are permanent delivery failures because the address doesn’t exist or the account was closed.

Hard Bounce Rate: The percentage of sent messages that failed (bounced) because the address doesn’t exist or the account was closed. To calculate, divide the total number of bounced messages by the total number of emails sent. Multiply by 100 to express the percentage.

Spam Complaint: A complaint registered by a recipient who indicates that the email message is unwanted, whether it fits the classic definition of “spam” as an unsolicited email or simply any message the recipient no longer wants to

receive. The majority of spam complaints are received via a direct “feedback” loop with an ISP.

Spam Complaint Rate: The percentage of delivered email messages that generate spam complaints. To calculate, divide the total number of spam complaints by delivered emails and multiply by 100.

Unsubscribe Rate: The percentage of delivered email messages that generate unsubscribe requests. To calculate, divide the number of unsubscribe requests received by delivered emails and multiply by 100.

MORE RESOURCES

- [“Email Marketing Best Practices: A Modern Framework”](#) (blog)
- [“Secrets of Successful ‘From’ Names and Subject Lines”](#) (white paper)
- [“Inactive Email Subscribers: Tips for Taming the Beast”](#) (Webinar)
- [“Beyond Opens & Clicks: 5 Email Metrics to Boost Results and Prove Your Worth”](#) (White paper)
- [“Benchmarking: ‘Average’ Is the New Bottom”](#) (article)

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