HIMSS

Email Best Practices *Guidelines*

Easy Best Practices
for Emailing Chapter Members

SETTING UP YOUR GOALS

Email continues to remain one of the best ways to keep your members informed and engaged. When asked, the majority of people say their preferred method of receiving correspondence is still via email, but that doesn't mean that they want to or will read all the emails they receive. Your email is competing with 122 other daily emails in your members' inboxes, it will take some planning and strategizing to increase your chances of having your emails opened and read.

We've done the research and have the experience in email marketing and want to share that knowledge with you. Here are some best practices to follow before you get started on creating your next email.

FUN FACT:

We receive more than 122 emails during the average workday.
(Radicati Group)

Creating Your Message

Define Your Intentions: Be clear on why you are sending the email. Ask yourself what you wish to accomplish. Make sure that email is the best way to deliver your message.

Develop a Call To Action (CTA): Have your message revolve around one central call to action.

Write Thoughtfully: Keep your message short and to the point. Most people won't scroll down to continue reading, so place your CTA at the top of your email. Use bullet points to make it easier to read and understand. If you have a lot of information to share, provide links to web pages containing detailed content.

FUN FACT:

50% of emails opened on a mobile device only show 33-38 characters in portrait mode. Research indicates that emails with subject lines that are 17-24 characters long typically have better open rates. (Campaign Monitor)

SAMPLE SUBJECT LINES

INFORMAL: Keep your subject lines clear and concise to help members know why you are emailing them.

- Cloud security live webinar: August 8
- Big news: New stores opening near you
- Our new product is here!

COMMAND: Let your members know what you want.

- Subscribe to our monthly newsletter
- Join us in Las Vegas
- Stop wasting your money

OFFERS: Increase engagement with an email offer.

- Sneak peek at our future
- New eBook: The essential Guide to Social Media
- 30-day free trial

PERSONAL: Everyone loves personalization. Using a member's first name or personal info in the subject is a nice touch.

- Thanks for joining us, Joe
- Great to meet you at HIMSS21 last week
- Susan, try these new partner apps

URGENT: Creating a sense of urgency makes people take action.

- 2 days left to register!
- Don't miss these great deals!
- TODAY ONLY: Save 50% on registration!

STATISTICS: Use analytics and data to pique curiosity

- Businesses will be 100% virtual by 2020
- The latest COVID-19 statistic for your area
- You could lose 50% of your revenue

TEST, TEST, TEST: Discover member interests by testing **email subject lines**. Continually test your subject lines to see what gets the best open rates and emulate those in future emails.
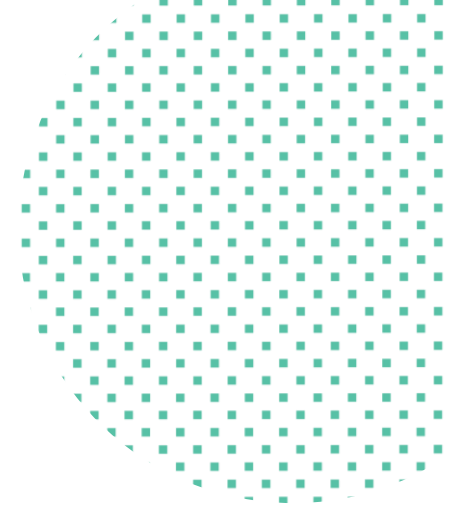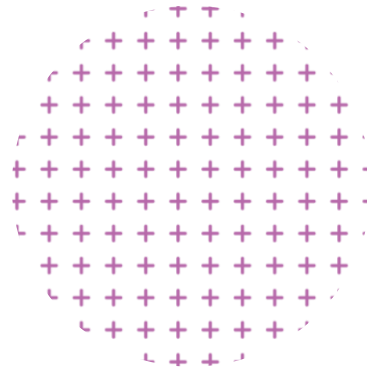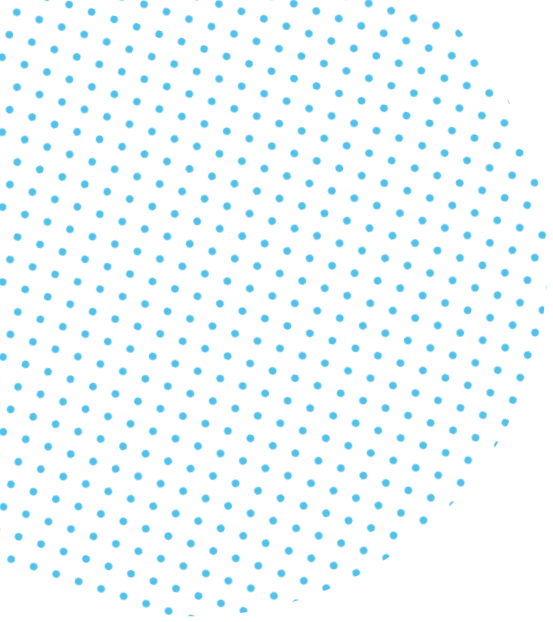
Considering Your Email Layout

- **Simpler is better**
  Make sure your members can answer what, why, and how after a few seconds of looking at your email.

- **Make it easy to read**
  Ensure the most important part of your message is at the top so members don't need to scroll.

- **Confirm it looks great on mobile**
  People are increasingly reading email on their phones. You want to make sure their experience is just as good as if they opened your email on a computer.

- **Repeat your CTA**
  Providing links/buttons like "Register", "Learn more", and "Watch now" at the top, middle and end of your messages makes it easier for your members.

Don't Forget to Include:

Contact info: Your members should always know exactly who is sending the email and how they can reach you.

Unsubscribe link: Make it easy for members to unsubscribe from your emails by including a link at the bottom.

Social Media Links: Make it easy for members to engage with you by including links to your Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts at the bottom of your email.
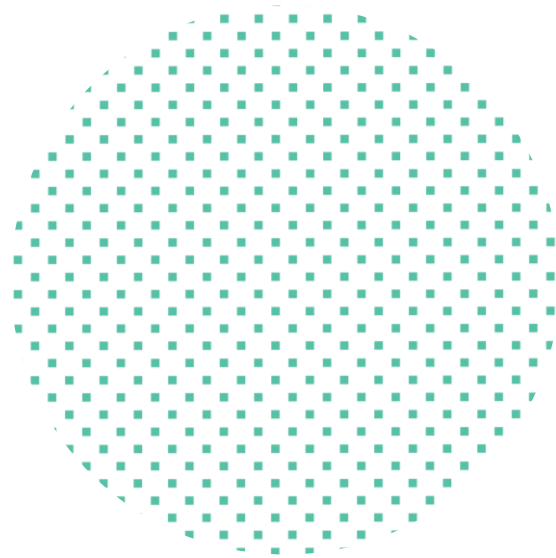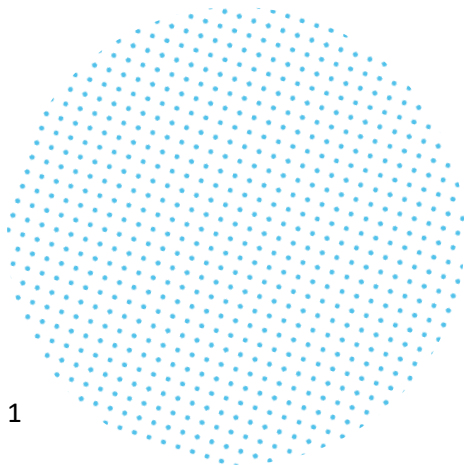
Preview your email: Before sending out your email, preview and test it. You want to make sure the email displays correctly both on traditional computers and on mobile devices.

Email Frequency: Events

A lot of questions come up about sending emails to promote webinars and local live events. HIMSS recommends that you begin promoting your events a month in advance, sending three to four emails before your event and one after. Here is our suggested event promotion schedule:

BEFORE THE EVENT EMAIL PROMOTION:

Your first email invitation should be the most detailed. The rest should be short messages, reminding members to register.

- 4 weeks out | Send first email invite

- 2-3 weeks out | Promote in newsletter or send out a second email invite

- 1 week out | Send email reminder

- Day before/or day of | Send short email reminder
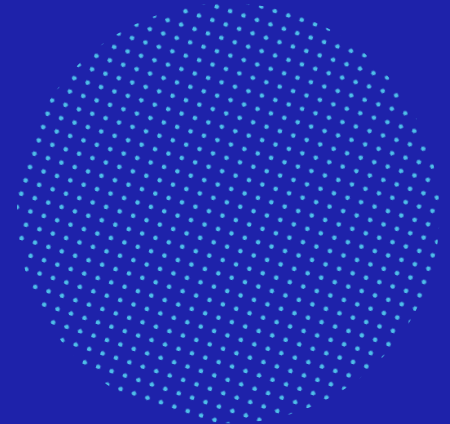
POST-EVENT EMAIL FOLLOW-UP

You will want to send out two different messages, one to those who registered and attended your event, and one to those who registered and did not attend. We also recommend that you include a link to the recording in your next newsletter, so all your members have access to it.

Send one of the following emails to those who registered one to two days after your event:

- **Registered and attended:** Send a thank you email with follow-up information you may have promised during your event and a link to the recording.
- **Registered and did not attend:** Send a "sorry we missed you" email with follow-up information promised during your event and a link to the recording.
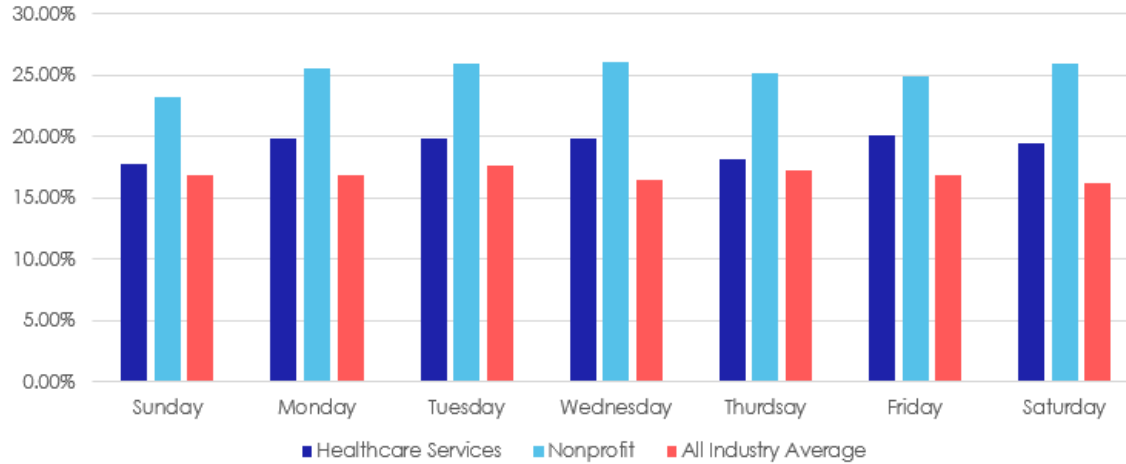
WHEN TO SEND YOUR EMAIL

You've formatted your message into a pleasing layout and your subject line is an attention-grabber.

Now, when should you send your email?
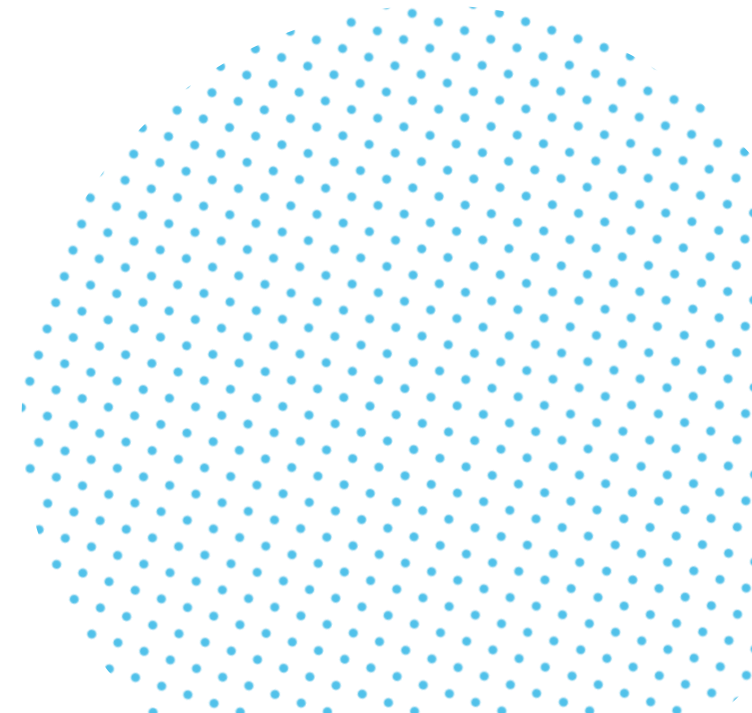
Open Rates

Campaign Monitor: US Email Marketing Benchmarks for 2020: By Day and Industry | Campaign Monitor

Monthly Email Topic Breakdown

BEST DAY TO EMAIL: WEDNESDAY
Research shows that nonprofits should send email anytime between Monday and Thursday. Tuesdays and Wednesdays receive slightly higher open rates.

BEST FREQUENCY TO SEND EMAIL: 5X A MONTH
It is important to keep in mind that our members receive more than 122 emails during their average workday (Radicati Group). In addition to your emails, they also receive regular emails from HIMSS. We encourage you to follow the old adage: less is more. **To ensure you get the most out of your email efforts,** *we recommend that you email your members no more than once a week.*

Factors to consider when determining email frequency:
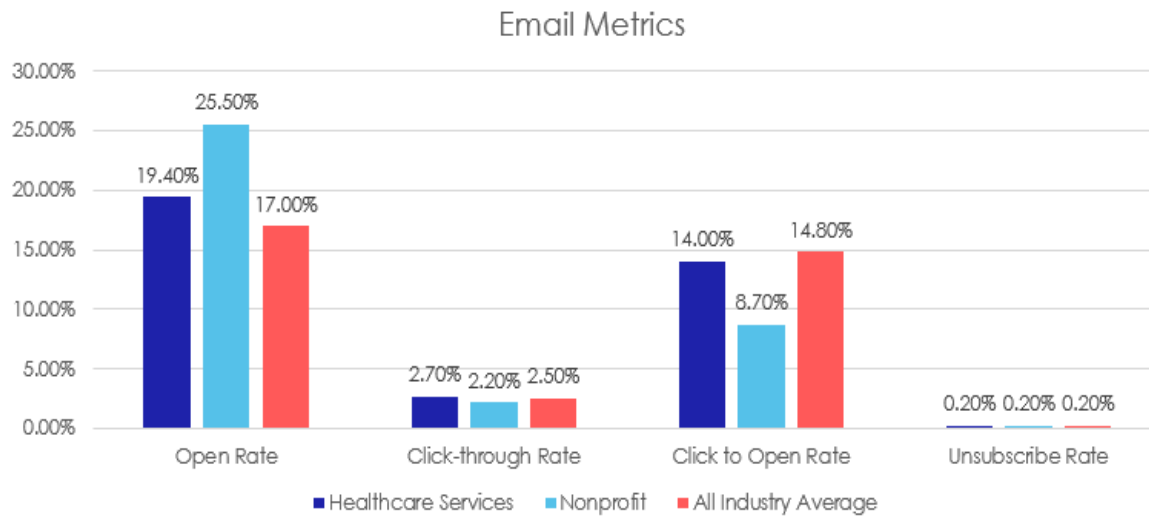
- On average, nonprofits send out five emails a month. (Campaign Monitor)
- Poll your members and see how frequently they want to receive your emails.
- Find out how often you have **high-quality and relevant information** to provide.
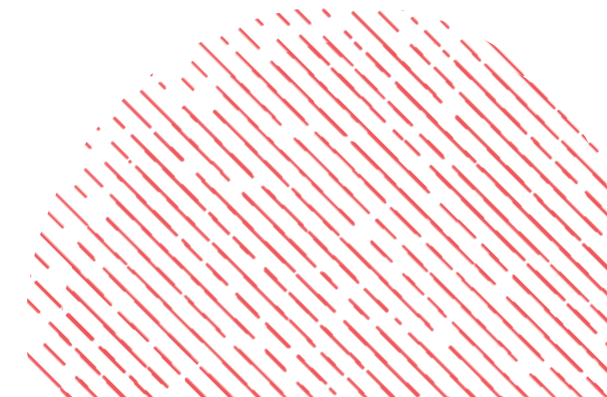
EXPLORING YOUR ANALYTICS

After sending your email, you'll want to see how it performed. Research shows that on average, emails have open rates between 17-25% with click-to-open rates between 8.7-14.8%. If your email has a lower open rate, you will want to do more testing on your subject lines. If your click-to-open rate is low, it could indicate that your members are not interested in your CTA.

Campaign Monitor: [US Email Marketing Benchmarks for 2020: By Day and Industry | Campaign Monitor](#)

Email Metrics

Legend: ■ Healthcare Services ■ Nonprofit ■ All Industry Average

	Healthcare Services	Nonprofit	All Industry Average
Open Rate	19.40%	25.50%	17.00%
Click-through Rate	2.70%	2.20%	2.50%
Click to Open Rate	14.00%	8.70%	14.80%
Unsubscribe Rate	0.20%	0.20%	0.20%

Open Rate: The percentage of recipients who opened the email. **This can demonstrate if your subject line is good.**

Click-Through Rate: The percentage of all recipients who clicked on the call-to-action link.

Click-to-Open Rate: The percentage of recipients who opened the email and then clicked on the call-to-action link. Can demonstrate if your content is engaging.

Unsubscribe Rate: The percentage of recipients who no longer want to receive your emails. Remove them from your list.

Increased unsubscribe rates can indicate:

- You are emailing too much
- Your content is not engaging your members

REGULATIONS WE NEED TO ABIDE BY | CAN-SPAM RULES ([Federal Trade Commission](#))

Despite its name, the CAN-SPAM Act does not apply just to bulk email. It covers all commercial messages, which the law defines as "any electronic mail message, the primary purpose of which is the commercial advertisement or promotion of a commercial product or service," including email that promotes content on commercial websites. The law makes no exception for business-to-business email. That means all email – for example, a message to former customers announcing a new product line – must comply with the law.

- **Don't use false or misleading header information.**
  Your "From," "To," "Reply-To," and routing information – including the originating domain name and email address – must be accurate and identify the person or business who initiated the message.

- **Don't use deceptive subject lines.**
  The subject line must accurately reflect the content of the message.

- **Identify the message as an ad.**
  The law gives you a lot of leeway in how to do this, but you must disclose clearly and conspicuously that your message is an advertisement

- **Tell recipients where you're located.**
  Your message must include a valid physical postal address. The footer in your email template will automatically include the HIMSS Chicago office address.

- **Tell recipients how to opt out of receiving future email from you.**
  Your message must include a clear and conspicuous explanation of how the recipient can opt out of getting email from you in the future. Make sure your spam filter doesn't block these opt-out requests.

- **Honor opt-out requests promptly.**
  You must honor a recipient's opt-out request within 10 business days.

- **Monitor what others are doing on your behalf.**
  Even if you hire another company to handle your email marketing, you can't contract away your legal responsibility to comply with the law.

GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR) REGULATIONS

If you communicate with individuals who are based within the European Union, then it is likely that you will have some responsibilities to meet under the GDPR regulation. Data privacy and protection are key themes of GDPR. If an organization collects or processes any personal data, including electronic information such as cookies, then they will need to take action to ensure the rights of the individual are protected.

- **LAWFULNESS, FAIRNESS, AND TRANSPARENCY**
  There are six lawful reasons for the processing of data, and at least one must apply to ensure GDPR compliance:
  1. Consent
  2. Contract
  3. Legal Obligation
  4. Vital Interests
  5. Public Task
  6. Legitimate Interests

- **PURPOSE LIMITATION**
  This second principle requires clarifications for collecting personal data and its intended purpose before the processing commences. Organizations are then required to document these justifications to demonstrate that due diligence and consideration were undertaken, and to ensure that there is no additional processing.

- **DATA MINIMIZATION**
  There needs to be careful consideration for each element of data collected, resulting in the identification of a clear basis of necessity. For example, if you require individuals to provide personal data to become a user, then the collection of their home address would be questionable unless there is a requirement to send items to their home.

- **ACCURACY**
  An assessment is needed as to how important personal data is. Then the care and attention placed into ensuring its accuracy grows with the level of importance. For example, confirmation of membership of a professional body may be essential for nursing or teaching roles.

- **STORAGE LIMITATION**
  Organizations must have defined timescales for the keeping of personal information. This means that processes must be in place for the regular deletion or anonymizing of data as it reaches the end of its processing timescale.

- **INTEGRITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY (SECURITY)**
  Should there be a data breach, there needs to be a level of data security that is compatible with the impact on the EU citizen. That then means that there must be appropriate levels protection in place to prevent data from being compromised, whether by accident or through deliberate action.

- **ACCOUNTABILITY**
  GDPR requires that not only does an organization recognize their responsibility to comply with its requirements, but also that it can also demonstrate that compliance is in place.