Effective Email Campaigns for Recovery Act Energy Efficiency Programs

Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

Email Campaign Overview

- **Choose email service provider (ESP)**
  - A must for professional email campaigns
  - ESPs provide proper HTML formatting; manage opt-outs, make testing, results measurement and legal compliance easy, and more
- **Build your email list**
  - Start with list of current /past participants
  - Use all means: your website, events, social media, referrals
- **Strategy – build your email campaign mix**
  - Plan long-term email strategy as part of marketing plan
  - Deliver a variety of content at different intervals
- **Design your template**
- **Develop and refine process each mailing**
  1. Choose recipients – segment database
  2. Create email – technical and content
  3. Test and send
  4. Process responses, bounces and opt-outs
  5. Evaluate results and refine campaign

Legal Requirements Overview

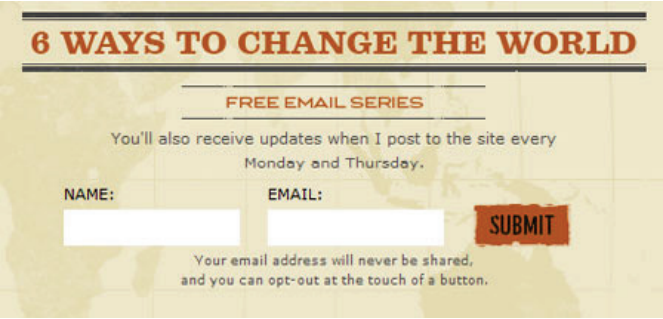
- **CAN-SPAM:** The legal requirements for commercial emails apply to for-profits and non profits and are good policy and etiquette for any purpose
  - CAN-SPAM: http://business.ftc.gov/documents/bus61-can-spam-act-compliance-guide-business
  - CAN-SPAM for nonprofits: http://www2.guidestar.org/rxa/news/articles/2005/staying-on-the-e-mail-up-and-up-can-spam.aspx?articleId=791
- **Header Info:** "From" "To" and subject must be true and accurate.
- **Address:** Include physical company address; registered P.O. box is OK.
- **Unsubscribe:** Must provide easy and conspicuous way to unsubscribe with link in email or online. Must honor requests within 10 business days.
- **Ad Disclosure:** If you're sending an commercial message (ad) to people who have not opted in, identify it as an advertisement.
- **Sharing:** Don't share email address of those who have unsubscribed.
- **Harvesting:** Don't randomly generate email addresses or collect email addresses from non-legitimate sources.
- **Monitor:** Check up on your email service provider to make sure they're following your policies.

Choosing your ESP

- **Why use an email service provider (ESP)?**
  - Professional HTML formatting and special ISPs – avoids spam & bulk filters
  - Legal compliance, testing, results reporting, managing opt-outs
  - Can serve dynamic content per reader location or interests
  - Can even include latest facebook comments in an email!
- **Considerations for choosing an ESP**
  - Shop around for service and pricing that fits your needs
  - Features to consider (see notes): storage space, private IP, customer support, reporting, A/B testing, list segmenting, free trial, infrastructure
- **Shop ESPs**
  - An excellent comparison of 10 ESPs (from July 2010): http://groundwire.org/resources/articles/email-service-provider-comparison-report-2010
  - Other ESPs include: AWeber, Benchmark, Constant Contact, e-Dialog, Epsilon Interactive, Pinpointe, Silverpop, Topica, Yesmail, and many more

Building your list

- **Build opt-ins – "permission marketing"**
  - Start with list of current and past participants
  - Use all means to invite people to opt-in to your email list: website, events, every phone call/contact, social media, articles
  - Let them know what they get for signing up!
  - Referrals via 'forward this email' link in your emails
- **The sign-up process**
  - 1-step process – thank you/welcome
  - 2-step – ask for confirmation
  - (See notes for details)



- **Rented/purchased email lists**
  - Use for announcing program startups/new major initiatives.
  - Important to keep lists "clean" (clear out all bouncebacks promptly)
  - Make sure to code different lists and track and measure results

Strategy

- **Define overall goals of e-communications**
  - Allow time to formulate messages that support goals
  - Don't rush email campaigns – make each message count
- **Define purpose of each email campaign**
  - How it fits into overall e-marketing strategy
  - Each message should build on the last
  - Different purposes may require different vehicles

- **Examples of goals**
  - Announce new program, drive traffic to your website, build awareness, build reputation and relationship, grow your email list, get them to consider an action, get them to TAKE an action, conduct a survey
- **A key goal of a single email campaign**
  - Get people to open the email and read the message!

Types of E-communication

- **Email Newsletters**
  - Long-term relationship and reputation builder
  - Provides information of value (news, tips,)
  - Start slowly (e.g., bi-monthly) - deadlines roll around fast!
- **Blog-style educational message**
  - 1-2 topics that go into some detail – include links
  - Personalized 1 on 1 tone
- **Announcements**
  - Program launches, program updates, white papers
  - Send as needed - but consider no more than 1-2x/month
- **Surveys**
  - Host survey online - provide link in email

Keys to email success

- **Clarify the objective – focus each message**
  - Each email in the series should have one key objective, (e.g., introduce program; build relationship by providing useful info; call to action).
- **Know your audience**
  - Only send information relevant to them
- **Build your reputation over time**
  - Plan series of emails as part of overall strategy
  - Provide content of value and interest in every email
  - The goal is to have a conversation and build the relationship over time
- **Email frequency: build trust, don't be annoying**
  - Set expectations for content and frequency and stick to it
  - Depends on purpose – 1x/week max; 1-2x/month
- **Maximize your email open rates with strong subject lines**
  - Also – send emails on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday for best open rates

Content “Musts”

- **All email campaigns/newsletters should include:**
  - Both HTML and plain text version
  - Link to an online version of your newsletter – right at top of email
    - **Having trouble viewing this email? Click here**
  - Links to your social sites
  - Footer: Home page and contact information including address
  - Unsubscribe link and link to privacy policy
  - Also helpful – link for subscribers to update their information
- **Footer Example:**

This email was sent to estuart@lbl.gov by jsmith@abc.org | Forward this email
Update profile/Email Address |Instant removal with SafeUnsubscribe™ | Privacy Policy
Company ABC | 123 Main Street, Suite 1 | Boston, MA 01234 | Home

When graphics don’t display

MEEA Minute - February 2011 Inbox | x

Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance to me show details 12:33 PM (2 hours ago) Reply

Images are not displayed.
Display images below - Always display images from anavolio@mwalliance.org

MEEA_header
MEEA Minute — February 2011

In this Issue

Welcome to the MEEA Minute, our monthly newsletter, including news from MEEA and our members a efficiency news and events from around the Midwest, and more. In this issue read about:

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- New MEEA Members
- New MEEA Staff
- Registration now open for DOE Technical Assistance South Central Region Peer to Peer Exc Meeting in San Antonio, TX.
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- MEEA Technical Webinar: March 15th - Building Operator Certification
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- MEEA Job Announcement: Senior Buildings Policy Associate

Articles

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Champaign – Canceled

Kansas
Parsons - April
Topeka – June & July

Michigan
Okemos – April

Michigan
Bemidji - March

Ohio
Pepper Pike - April

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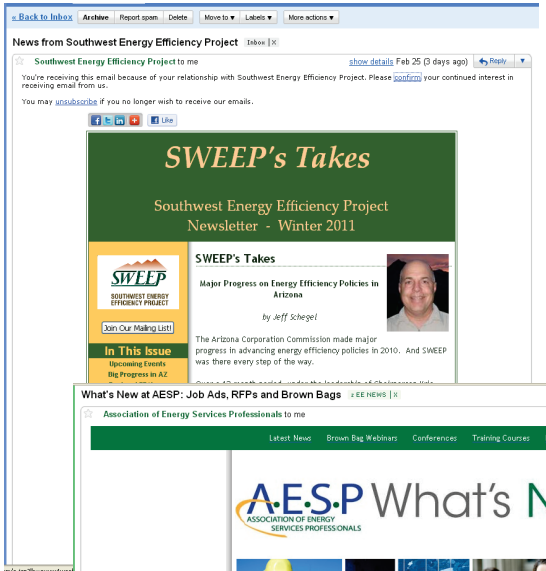
Subject and "From" Line

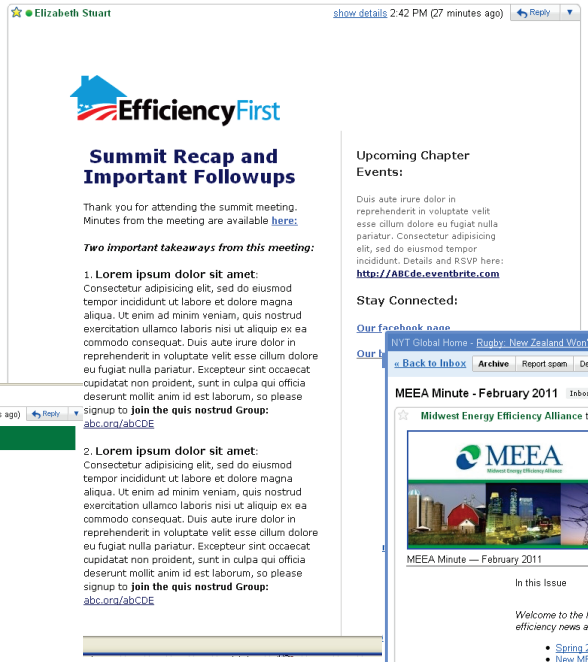
- **Subject line is KEY factor in open rates**
  - Decision to open email is heavily based on subject and "from" line
  - Email marketers recommend spending 1/2 of your time writing the subject and intro and 1/2 on content and design
- **Make subject line short and specific**
  - About 45-55 characters maximum
  - Make it accurate and specific as to topic, benefit or value offer
    - **Good: "10 energy-saving tips for homeowners"**
    - **Good: "ABC.Org March Newsletter"**
    - **Not good: "Free Webinar Thursday!" (not specific)**
- **Sender "From" line – keep it personal**
  - Use a person, e.g., From: jsmith@abc.com
- **More tips:**
  - http://www.pinpointe.com/blog/webinar-18-writing-tips-to-improve-email-results

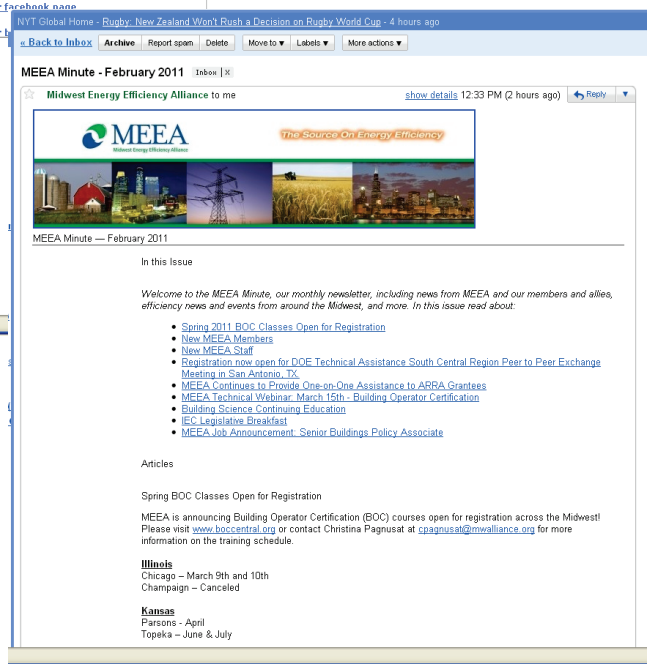
The Body of the Email

- **The introduction – "Above the fold"**
  - The first 3 lines are generally what shows in the email preview pane – use this space well to engage interest/encapsulate point of the email
  - Layout should allow recipient to immediately see important text
  - Use personalized salutation: Dear [name]
- **The main body**
  - Width – maximum 600-800 pixels
  - Effective length depends on purpose of email
    - Newsletters – 1-2 pages, list topics at top with links
    - Announcements/calls to action – short, with links to site
    - Educational blog-type can be a bit longer, with links

Email Template Examples







Avoid Spam Filters

- **Spam filters assign 'points' to various words and phrases**
  - See how one program flags spam: http://spamassassin.apache.org/tests_3_2_x.html
- **Avoid the following in your emails:**
  - Large graphics or heavy use of graphics with little text
  - Excessive or repeated punctuation (!!!***) or ALL CAPS
  - Words like "free," "money," "guarantee," "credit card"
  - Bright RED or GREEN fonts
  - Don't design in MS Word and export the code to HTML. Don't attach documents; host them and provide a link in the email
- **Clean old addresses out of your list regularly**
  - You may get blocked if you send to too many non-existent addresses
- **Get "whitelisted"**
  - Use consistent "from" address
  - Ask subscribers to add you to their address book

Note:
To ensure e-mail delivery to your inbox, please add events@elist-ramtha.com and newsletter@elist-ramtha.com to your address book or your safe list

Technical Checklist

- **Create email using HTML or online editor**
  - Don't overdesign - fancy graphics can be problematic
  - Do create "multi-part version" – Text and HTML
  - Run a spam checker and proofread!
  - Preview email in various email clients
    - Gmail, Outlook, Yahoo, AOL, Hotmail
- **Sending and processing**
  - Segment your list, write email for that segment
  - Do a test run – possibly an A/B split test
  - Schedule with ESP/send – Tues/Wed/Thurs best
  - Process opt-outs and bounced emails promptly
- **Evaluate results**
  - ESP can report open and click-thru rates and compare to other emails
  - Talk to ESP about what they count as an 'open'
- **Recorded webinar with some technical tips:** **http://www.pinpointe.com/blog/webinar-email-marketing-201-tips-to-improve-email-delivery-prospectdb**

Resources

- **Webinars and documents – general information**
  - http://www.pinpointe.com/resources
  - http://www.pinpointe.com/blog
    - **http://www.pinpointe.com/blog/webinar-email-marketing-201-tips-to-improve-email-delivery-prospectdb**
  - http://www.mailchimp.com/resources/
- **Information on whitelisting**
  - http://aweber.com/blog/email-deliverability/how-to-get-whitelisted.htm
  - http://www.blueskyfactory.com/support/whitelist/
  - Example instructions to subscribers for various email clients:
    - http://www.firemailing.com/whitelist.html
    - http://www.aweber.com/faq/questions/283/How+Do+I+Whitelist+My+Address%3F
- **Ideas for templates**
  - http://www.campaignmonitor.com/templates/
  - http://www.jeffhendricksondesign.com/html-email-newsletter-templates/
  - http://www.purple-dragonfly.com/html-email-newsletters.html