



EMAIL MARKETING WHITE PAPER

43 Christmas Email Marketing Tips

by Newsletter2Go

BONUS: 7 Christmas
Campaign Ideas

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Strategy and Planning | 01 |
| 2. Design and Creation | 06 |
| 3. Testing and Optimization | 11 |
| 4. Targeting and Delivery | 15 |
| Bonus: Christmas Campaign Inspirations | 19 |



Introduction

Christmas is one the largest economic stimulus in many countries due to a dramatical sales increase. That especially holds true for online retailers, who benefit enormously from the Christmas season. According to a recent [Deloitte 2016 Holiday Survey](#), ecommerce sales are expected to boom again. Shoppers plan to spend an equal amount online versus in stores. This trend shows no signs of slowing down. According to the Time, consumers tend to make [more holiday purchases on the web with each passing year](#). Therefore, it is crucial to create a compelling Christmas email marketing campaign that will stand out from other campaigns and translate into more sales.

One of the best marketing channels to invest in is an online newsletter, because it will help you drive sales like no other channel. According to McKinsey, [email is 40 times more effective at acquiring new customers than Facebook or Twitter](#). There are several reasons for newsletter success. Email campaigns produce highly desirable results because you can personalize them easily. Moreover, newsletters are a highly efficient tool: once they are opened by a subscriber, they will enjoy their full attention. Furthermore, [email marketing generates a 3800% ROI](#). Last but not least: newsletters are very popular among recipients. Around 70% claim that they prefer to receive [advertisement of-fers](#) via email.

With Christmas around the corner, many newsletter contacts are looking to make a purchase. Marketers are perfectly aware of these behavioral patterns; therefore, they all try to win customers with newsletters. Thus, one needs precise objectives and a smooth plan for a successful Christmas email marketing campaign. A great newsletter campaign grips the customer's heart, helps you connect with the recipient and incentivize the reader to share your email with family and friends.

This is where we come in. To get you there, we've put together tried-and-tested tips that will make your newsletter stand out from the crowd. We'll assist you from design and optimization to campaign dispatch. As a bonus, you we compiled a list of Christmas campaigns ideas at the end of the white paper.

We wish you a successful sales season!

Your Newsletter2Go team





1. Strategy and Planning

Define Strategic Objectives

Christmas newsletters are created with specific goals in mind. The better the planning is, the higher the chances of success. Consequently, low-level planning is likely to produce weak results.

Before you plan your campaign, you need to learn more about your subscribers. Who are they? What are they looking for? What challenges might they face during the festive season and how can you answer their needs?

Actionable Tip: Check:

- subscriber purchase history
- the time zone they are in
- where they open emails (mobile devices vs. desktops)

Actionable Tip: If you don't have enough data, you might want to send out an online survey. Its results should shed light on why your customers are with you.

Set a goal that your newsletter is supposed to reach. That could be, for example, revenue generation or increase in website traffic. Once your goal is clear, you will find it easy to pick appropriate newsletter design, choose the right receiver group and dispatch time.





Past Year Analysis

Past year analysis proves crucial when it comes to creating this year’s email marketing campaign as it gives useful clues. What do you need to pay attention to? Analyze open rates, click-through and conversion rates in your previous email campaigns to learn what worked well and what could be improved. You might find it useful to see what results did your campaigns bring over time. When did your sales peak and when did your business see declining sales? Maybe some people were slow on the uptake and they took their time to open the newsletter. You should also consider what kind of content performed best in the past and what goals had you accomplished with it. Certain newsletters might have had very good open rates; however other email campaigns might have resulted in higher conversion rates. Not every newsletter translates into a perfect conversion funnel, which is why some emails with poorer opening rates achieve better conversion rates.

Actionable Tip: Newsletter2Go’s cluster reports enable you to find differences between your target groups. If you noticed any age differences, make sure you address your recipients differently.

Key Events

Depending on the date, you’d like to adapt your newsletter content to your recipient needs. The better the correlation between the date and content, the higher the chances of success. Make sure that whatever you send, provides special value. For example, offer your clients free express delivery just before Christmas Eve. This will surely go the long way.

December 2016

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|------------------|---------|-----------|----------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 Free Shipping Day | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 Super Saturday | 25 Christmas/ Hannukah |
| 26 Boxing Day | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 New Year’s Eve | |





Change Up Your Newsletter

Your subscribers are likely to get multiples emails from online sellers with similar offers, especially before the Christmas day.

Therefore, it would be prudent to come up with an original campaign and email content. If you send out only sales newsletters, your customers will soon get bored, no matter how great the deals are.

Actionable Tip: If you want to up your newsletter game, start sending out product updates, guides, surveys, contests, Christmas greetings and community related content. Think what else you'd like to share with your audience and send it out.

Stick to Proven Strategies

When drafting your Christmas campaign, make sure you'll go for whatever has worked before. After all, your target audience hasn't changed throughout the year and you can increase sales with the same strategies.

Same rules apply to Christmas deals. If your subscribers are used to seeing carefully curated products in their inboxes, this is exactly what you send out this time.

Offer Helpful Information

You can increase website traffic and sales in various ways, not necessarily with product offerings. Send out a newsletter with shipping terms and conditions. This will remind your customers about shipment deadlines and incentivize them to buy gifts.

Even a product update email might increase your sales. Once you've updated your stock with favored or sold out products, send out a quick email to your email list. You never know who's still waiting for their favorite perfumes.





Don't sell. Inspire.

Spreading the Christmas spirit with your newsletter usually triggers them into a buying mode.

Create a gift list and inspire your recipients with what they could buy for their loved ones. You will find more details on the topic at the end of this paper in the Inspiration for Christmas Campaigns section.

Another way to transform your products into inspiring content is to send out Christmas tips. Share home decorating ideas, tested-and-tried recipes as well as gadget recommendations.

A good Christmas travel deal will convince these who aren't into the holiday craze. Travel packages are great for many groups – those who want to escape the cold and those who'd like to follow Santa Clause's steps.

Create Shopping Events

Limited-time special events give you the opportunity to you engage your recipients and create exclusivity for your offer. You might stick to celebrating regular events with your customers (for example Black Friday) or create new ones (Give-Yourself-a-Gift Day).

Obviously, the event should be announced in advance. Let your customers wonder what deals will you have on offer. This is a great way to attract customers to the brick and mortar store. Just make sure that certain deals are valid for newsletter recipients only, which will create a sense of exclusivity.





Offers Special Deal to Loyal Customers

Christmas is a perfect occasion to show your loyal customers that you value them. There is a number of ways to make them feel special.

First things first: freebies with multiple purchases are always a great (and easy to implement) idea. Secondly, reward referrals. A freebie or a discounted product will incentivize your customers to recommend your store.

Actionable tip: Make sure you always include social sharing buttons in your newsletters, so that your customers could easily share your email campaigns.

Holding a preview evening for loyal customers only will certainly give them an exclusive feel. Not only will your customers be able to buy first, but also will they have a chance to network and enjoy a nice evening with good refreshments.

Actionable tip: Don't forget to send a follow up email with event photos and new products so that your customers could download photos and share them with family and friends.

Inviting clients to test developing products is another great way to drive engagement. They will love to have a sense of ownership and will be happy to give you feedback. In that way, you will easily pique their interest.

Plan Your Shop and Landing Pages

You can't underestimate the role of a unified company design, especially during the Christmas time. A transition from a newsletter and a landing page should be a smooth experience. Site orientation is key: after all, customers don't want to waste an hour looking for desired products.

If you are offering newsletter products in your online shop, you should ensure your customers will be able to find them quickly. They should also fit into the overall sales offer. If you advertise clothes in the newsletter but happen to direct him to the Christmas tree section, expect bounces.

Make sure you apply Christmas design to your newsletter, website and across different social media channels.





2. Design and Creation

Create Matching Design

The newsletter design should convey your corporate design to a tee. A Christmas newsletter is supposed to spread the holiday spirit, therefore allow for Christmas design elements. Find out what do your subscribers have an emotional connection to and then add appropriate elements. What is it that draws your customers to you?

Obviously, various clients are with you for a number of different reasons. While you have to go for a unified design, you might want to insert a different photo for each target group. If you are familiar with your customers' interests and you segmented them into different interest categories, send out diversified newsletters.

Create a List of Design Taboos

Each target group is characterized by different preferences. While a specific newsletter design might work with Group A, it might not go down well with the Group B.

Actionable Tip: Make a list of your groups preferences. If you know what your recipients wouldn't want to see, put it immediately on the no-go list.





Use Christmas Templates

First things first: HTML emails will perform significantly better than text-only emails, because you can insert images, links, and use various formatting. If you aren't a HTML expert or don't feel like creating a template, which can always use a ready template and insert pictures and text to your heart's content.

Just like any other newsletter, you should go for a responsive design as more than half of all emails are opened on mobile devices and the holiday shopping season ever has been increasingly catering to mobile commerce.

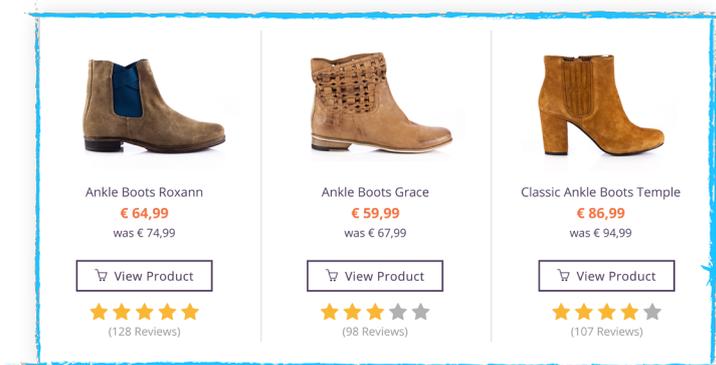




Implement Trust Elements

Customer reviews are bound to increase trust levels and convince other customers to make a purchase.

Naturally, you can include more reviews, such as delivery or service review. Customers want to know that you guarantee a quick product delivery even in the hectic pre-Christmas time. This will set you apart from your competitors.



Set Up Welcome Campaigns

Email automation will save you a lot of time. Automated newsletters are triggered by customer behavior or certain events. It's a useful tool in building customer relationships as soon as customers decide to subscribe your newsletter. A welcome email should contain promo code or discount – be quick to hook your customer in. Follow up with another email in the next couple of days. The next campaign could include tips or showcase top selling products.

Automated mailings don't require manual effort after the setup, therefore you can be sure that they will arrive during the holidays.





Create Automated Follow-Up Emails

Automated email can be personalized. That happens if, for example, you address your customer with their first name or send an email after a specific situation has occurred.

Automated newsletters are particularly useful if you want to set up follow-up emails.

Actionable Tip: Abandon cart email is particularly handy. It will remind customers of products they selected but failed to buy. It might be the case that your subscriber was set to buy certain items, but they ran out of time. Many customers will welcome an abandon cart email.

Moreover, automated emails can help you activate lapsed customers. It's a worthwhile investment, because customer reactivation is much cheaper than acquisition. Make sure that a reactivation email is sent out after a certain time (x days, weeks or months - depending on the product life cycle).

Send Personalized Emails

Personalized emails result in higher open and click rates. Tailor your newsletters to your customers when sending out a Christmas campaign. How can you personalize an email? Address your subscriber with their first name, or offer location specific products. You can easily implement personalized content with placeholders. Specify personalization conditions and enter desired values. When you use marketing automation, the software will automatically insert correct data for each recipient.

Actionable Tip: If you'd like to up your newsletter game and save time, create one newsletter... that will then be automatically personalized once it reaches different audience groups. The personalized design blocks feature allows you to create one newsletter and insert as many personalization elements within as you'd like. For example, if you'd like your female and male audience to receive different newsletters, you just create one campaign and determine personalization conditions. Simply upload two newsletter images – one with women's and another one with men's shoes. Then specify which audience group should get to see men's and which women's shoes.

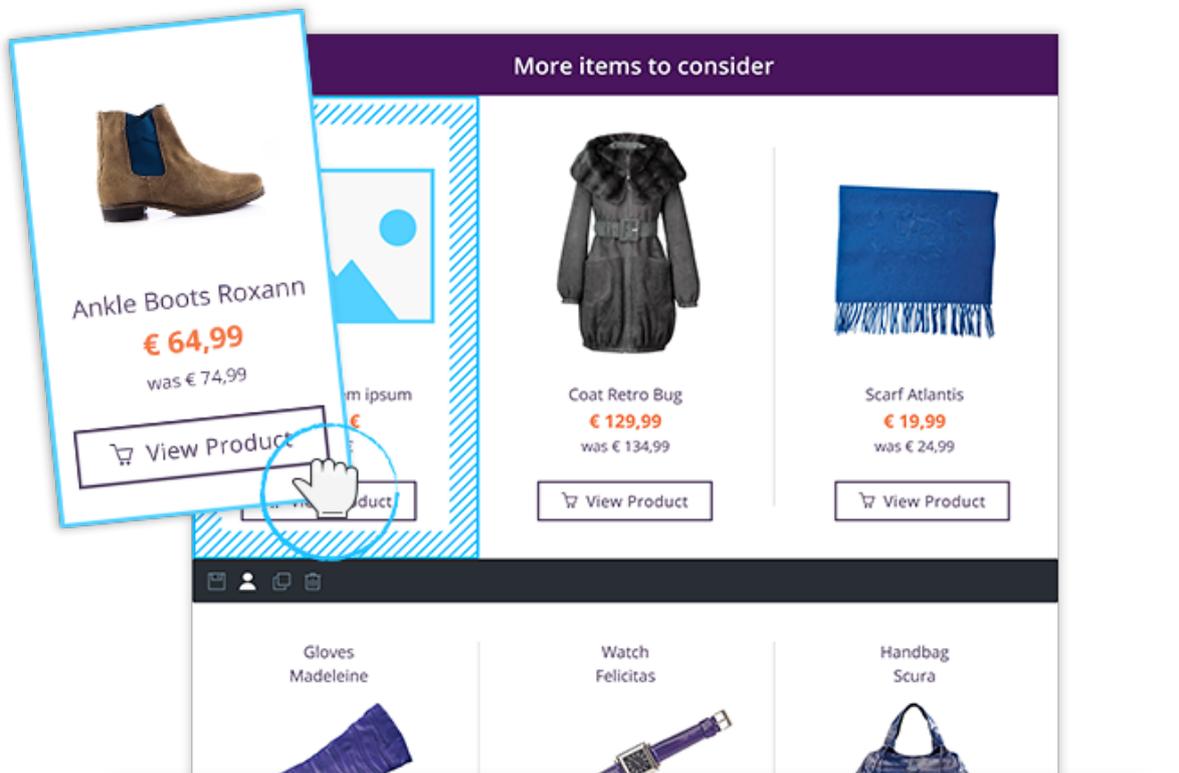




Personalized Product Recommendation

Use available data to send out personalized products. The data pieces you might want to look at is behavioral data or purchase history. Personalized product recommendation mean significantly higher conversion rates. Industry giants like Amazon have discovered and started utilizing personalized product recommendation a long time ago.

Actionable Tip: Send product recommendations automatically using a recommendation engine. Then you specify which criteria should be used for product selection. For example, you can select recently viewed products, the most popular items, or recently bought products. The recommendation engine automatically inserts appropriate products for every single recipient.





3. Testing and Optimization

Send the Best Newsletter with A / B Testing

It's prudent to test various newsletter variants against each other before you go for campaign dispatch. That would allow you to send the best performing version in the end. Here's what you should test:

- Subject line and front name to optimize the open rate
- Images and CTAs to optimize the click and conversion rate

Find out what content appeals to your recipients. Test different lengths for subject lines, see if personalization works out. Discover which from name will perform better: shall you go for a company name or put a face behind it? Test different CTAs as well as different products. A/B testing will tell you exactly which option performed best and the best performing variant will be automatically sent out to every recipient.

Test Unusual Subject Lines

The best performing subject lines are usually 50 to 60 characters long. However, it may be worthwhile to experiment with unusually short or long subject lines. A/B testing gives you a chance to find out whether a shorter or longer subject line will result in better open rates.

Feel free to experiment and test subject lines, which aren't typical for your product or industry. Try to grab recipient's attention by creating unusual associations.

Actionable Tip: Using Unicode characters in the subject line might do the trick. Snowflakes, stars, Christmas trees and gifts are perfectly related to Christmas. Some email clients even display these icons as colorful pictures, which are pure attention grabbers. Just make sure that these Unicode characters are relevant.

Here are some Unicode characters you could use: ❄️ ★ ✨ ✨ 🌲 🌲 🎅 📺 📺 🎁 🎁 🧑🏻 🧑🏻



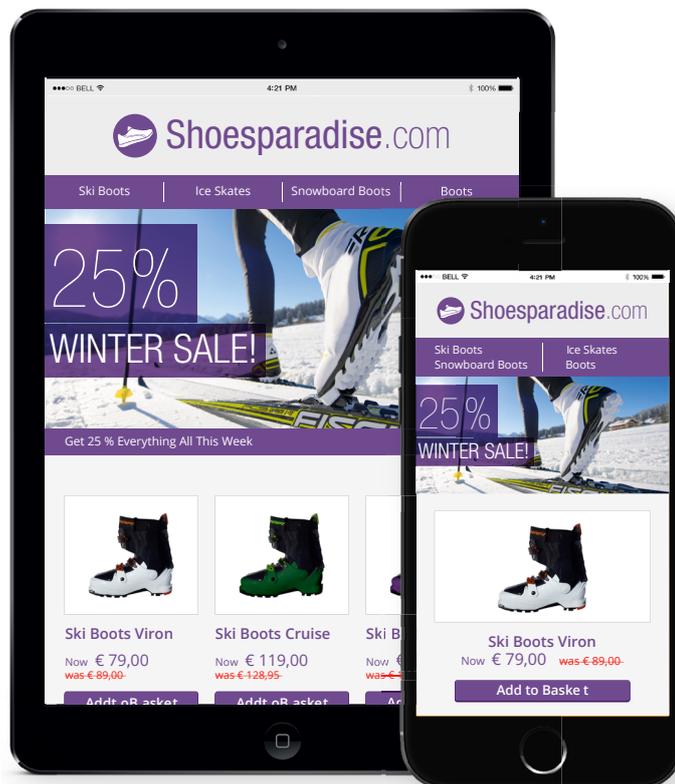


Optimize Emails for Mobile Devices

More than 50% of all emails are now opened on mobile devices. Therefore, using responsive newsletter design is a must. Otherwise, your newsletters won't make for a pleasant reading experience on various devices. According to Practical Commerce, mobile commerce is expected to grow by [60 percent during the coming holiday shopping season](#).

Emails not optimized for mobile mean a missed opportunity. Many subscribers will simply delete an email they can't read. Obviously, it leads to lower click rates, higher bounces and results in annoyed subscribers.

Actionable Tip: Here's what you need to pay attention to when going for responsive design: readability and usability. You want the buttons and links to be easily clickable, therefore a thumb click area should be increased. You should choose a single-column layout so that the font will be bigger. Many design principles for mobile apply for desktop, for example the use of adequate whitespace.





Test Each Newsletter Before Sending It Out

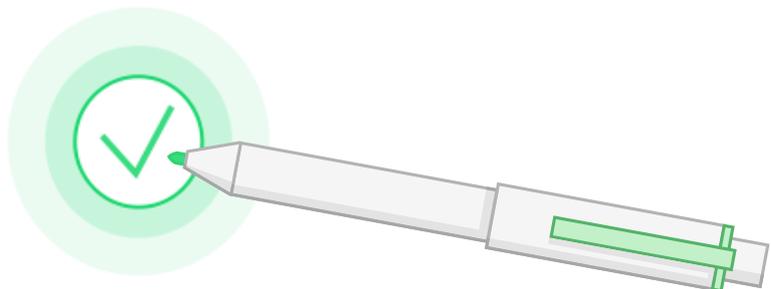
You can't allow for any mistakes in your newsletter, therefore you should send it out before email dispatch. Here's what you should check:

With **client testing**, you can check how your newsletter will be displayed in the end. See for yourself how will it display on various mobile devices and on desktop. Since every email client displays emails differently, it is recommendable that you go for client testing.

Moreover, you can take a **spam test**.

A professional newsletter software guarantees high delivery rates due to whitelisting. Nevertheless, it's better to be safe than sorry as spam filters won't miss any opportunity to make an email as spam. To check whether the newsletter contains any traits of spam, you can perform a spam test based. Newsletter links should also be verified. Missing or broken links are especially annoying because they will hurt your conversion rates.

Last but not least: make sure you check what would your newsletter look like if its images fail to load. Some email clients might block them, so you should be certain that alt text will accurately describe what are all pictures all about.



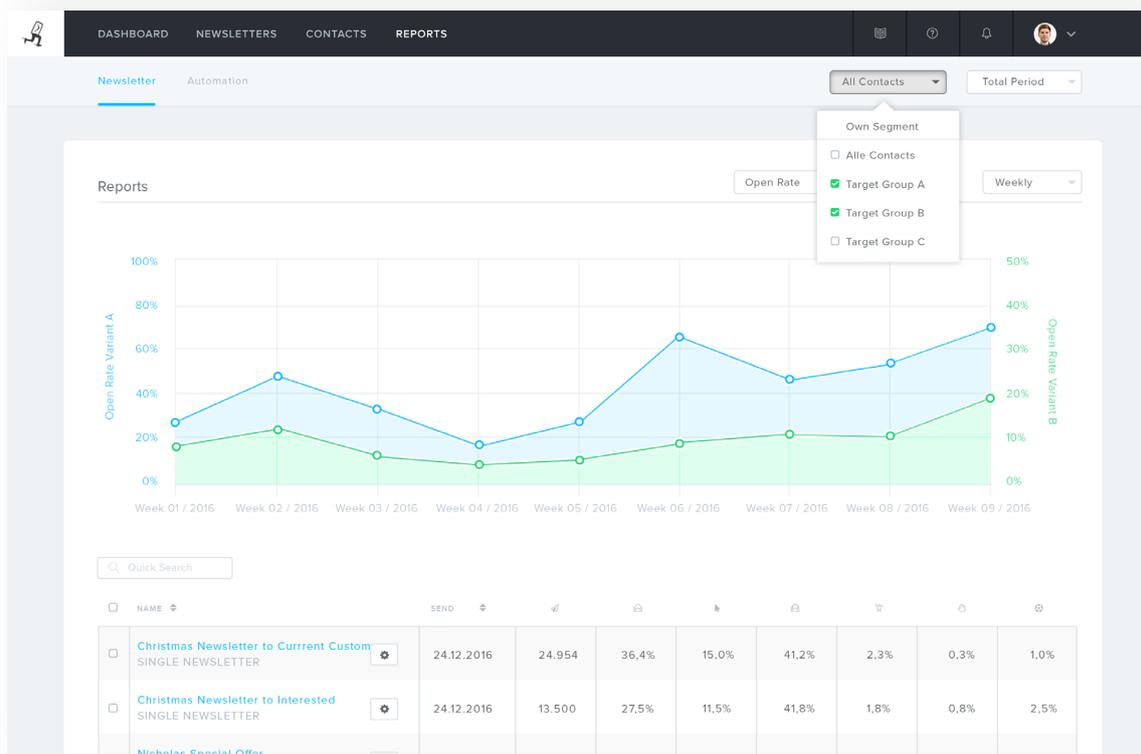


Utilize Segment Reporting

Analyzing every single newsletter as well as test results will help you identify areas for improvement. What you need to focus on in the first place would be open, click through, conversion and unsubscribe rate.

Detailed reports will help you to get a better grasp of your newsletter’s performance. For example, click maps will show you which links were clicked most. Geolocating shows you where newsletter openings and clicks took place.

It will be useful to compare the newsletter performance among different target groups. You can, for example, segment reports by gender, age, product preferences or activity. That will help you discover untapped revenue potential. Next time you send out a campaign, address your high-value customers in a different manner and see how it will convert into sales increase.





4. Targeting and Delivery

Segment Contacts and Address Target Groups Properly

Sending out a blanket email to every recipient isn't a good idea. Every subscriber has different interests, preferences and needs. If you'd like to increase your odds, you should segment your audience. Contact segmentation will go a long way as it will allow you to send relevant content.

How can you segment your audience? Usually, people segment audience by traits such as gender, age, location, sales or activity. However, it's up to you to decide how to segment your contacts. Once you see that some recipients have one thing in common, create a new trait.

If you want to drive sales, go for advanced segmentation options. You could, for example, set up traits such as buying behavior (currency, frequency, purchase value) or any other behavior (potential, loyalty, low/high willingness to take risks).

Segment by Active and Inactive Recipients

It might be worthwhile to segment recipients based on their activity. Obviously, you have a better chance to succeed with active recipients.

Once you have a list with inactive subscribers, make sure to win them back with a reactivation campaign. This campaign should differ from the usual newsletter. If you'd like to learn more, read this [comprehensive blog post on how to re-engage inactive email subscribers](#).

You can also segment contacts based on their last activity. Or you might want to segment by the newsletter opening rate. If you'd like to measure results by click rate, your group will shrink but still present very accurate results.

The newsletter opening rate can only be measured when newsletter images have been loaded. For that reason, whatever result will you get, they will be only an approximate evaluation. However, click rates number will be very reliable.





Segment by Denomination

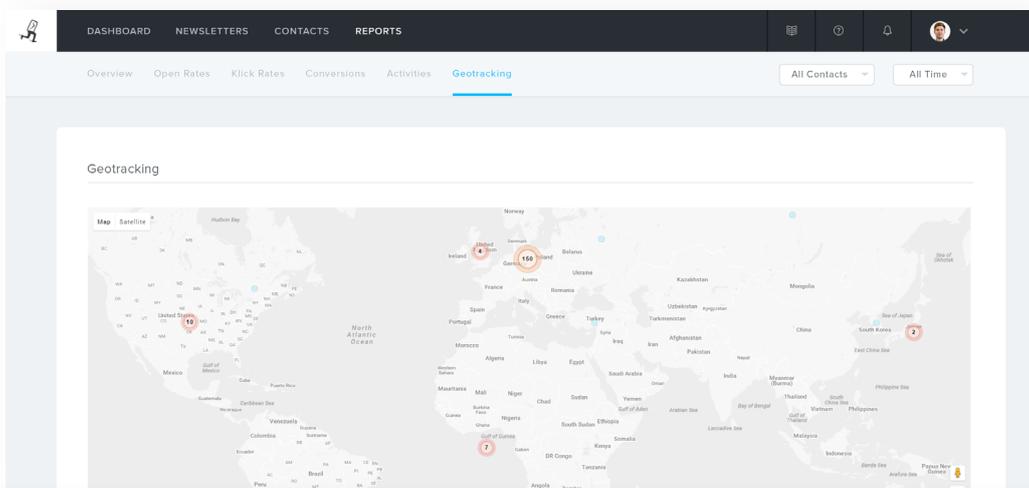
Christmas is celebrated around the world by approximately 2 billion people. However, there are also other holidays worth mentioning, for example Hannukah. Addressing other holidays in your newsletter will surely earn you extra brownie points.

If you'd like to reach your reader on a more personal level, you need to be aware of certain dates. If you'd like to make sure every subscriber receives a suitable holiday newsletter, you could always ask them about it beforehand. Ask every new subscriber about newsletter preferences in the subscription process.

Segment by Location

Local offers will add extra relevance to your newsletter. Christmas traditions vary from one location to another and this is what you should account for before you start drafting your newsletter.

Consequently, different regions have a different demand for seasonal products. In the southern hemisphere, Christmas celebration take place in the summer. Therefore, sending out "typical" Christmas products to these subscribers simply won't cut it.





Regular Newsletters Prevent Bounce Rates

The bounce rate indicates a percentage of undelivered emails. Emails might not get delivered due to a full inbox or nonexistent email address.

If you haven't been in touch with your subscribers and suddenly send out a Christmas newsletter, you should account for a high bounce rate. Some recipients might have changed their email addresses.

Therefore, it is crucial to send out newsletters every once in a while, to keep a clean email list. In that way, you will deal with a lower bounce rate when sending out a Christmas newsletter. You might wonder if this matters at all. It does – the lower the bounce rate, the better IP reputation will you have... which translates into better delivery rates.

Use Address Books to Keep Track of Recipients

Newsletter2Go's address books enable you to manage different email lists. This feature comes particularly in handy if you happen to manage multiple client groups or online shops. Every address book always contains up-to-date recipient data: registrations, unsubscriptions and bounces are separately managed for each address book and updated automatically. It prevents you from sending a newsletter to group B, if it was destined for group A. And every single group will receive the correct newsletter.

Actionable Tip: Keep track of your entire database by saving all registered addresses into a hidden Newsletter2Go address book. Your recipients won't know that they've landed in this book. However, be vary of sending out newsletters to this address book: recipients haven't explicitly signed up for it, so you shouldn't bother them with email campaigns.





Try different delivery times

Newsletter dispatch time is dependant on a number of reasons. When identifying the ideal delivery time, you should take the habits of your target audience into consideration as well as their daily routines. Newsletter contents and its goal also matter, just like your competitors mailing pattern.

While it is impossible to give a tailored advice, it might be prudent to start sending newsletters between 7 to 10 pm if you are an online retailer. Weekend dispatch will work for those who'd like to offer deals. Experimenting with sending frequency will certainly be a great learning opportunity and it will draw attention to your email campaigns.

Use a Whitelisted Server for Newsletter Dispatch

Under no circumstances should you send out Christmas newsletters from your personal email client. Popular email clients are not destined to send bulk emails.

First of all, you'd need to enter addresses manually, which is time-consuming. To make matters worse, spam filters are likely to mark most of your newsletters as spam and it will never reach inboxes.

Neither of these will happen with a professional newsletter software, because it uses a special server for newsletter dispatch. It is whitelisted, which means that it's registered as a trustworthy server. You could expect the delivery rates over 99%. In addition, the shipping process will prove to be much faster, so that all recipients can receive the newsletter at the same time.



Bonus: Christmas Campaign Inspirations

1. Offer Vouchers

Christmas vouchers are popular with both businesses and customers. Set up follow up emails that will reach your customers shortly before the sale ends. Be vary of offering vouchers too often, though, because your customers will expect to you to send them on a regular basis. Don't send too many vouchers, but once you do, make sure they represent quality offers.

2. Give Every 10th Order for Free

This one would make for a pretty unconventional offer. However, it will definitely boost order rates. You can either send an ordered product for free, refund the customer or give them a voucher that is equal to the amount they spent on Christmas gifts.

3. Send a Super Saturday Newsletter

The last Saturday before Christmas means one: big revenue opportunity for retailers. Don't forget to email deal-hungry last-minute shoppers. Offer special products and discounts in your newsletter and make sure they will easily learn about shipment times.

4. Christmas Emails

This email is a combination of greetings and special deals. Personalize deals for each customer by checking their purchase/browse history. Once your customer see that you address them with their first name and recommend products they are into, you could expect them to make more orders.



Bonus: Christmas Campaign Inspirations

5. Fundraiser

Not everyone wants to get or give a material gift. Make sure you present them with an attractive alternative. You can start a fundraiser in partnership with a well-known charity. For example, you can offer donate a portion of your Christmas revenue to a charity or offer donations and vouchers as Christmas presents? Communicate a fundraising goal and don't forget to share updates to increase revenue.

6. Gift Lists

Support your subscribers and help them find gifts for their loved ones. Send out various gift lists to different segments or include a couple of lists in one email. They should link directly to appropriate category pages in your shop. It's useful to create lists for different family members as well as compose more challenging lists (like for people who already have everything).

7. Address Those Who Aren't into The Christmas Craze

Not everyone celebrates Christmas or enjoys the holiday hustle and bustle. Therefore, you should address this group in a creative way. Let them decide what newsletters would they want to receive before the holiday season starts. Maybe they'd like to receive anti-Christmas newsletters or emails with holiday deals.





**We empower our
customers.**



www.newsletter2go.com