

## **GUIDELINES FOR EMAIL MESSAGE DESIGN BEST PRACTICES**

*You will need a **HTML version** and a **TEXT version** of your creative.*

### **HTML Guidelines**

The final copy of the HTML document should look exactly the way it is to be sent, with appropriate links in place.

1. Items to remember while creating HTML code:
  - a. **DO NOT** use MS Word as it adds too much unnecessary code that is caught by spam filters. **Use** HTML software such as Dreamweaver
  - b. **DO NOT** use layers – they won't work in email applications.
  - c. **DO NOT** use body attributes or markups in HEAD of HTML as web based applications tend to filter these out.
  - d. **DO NOT** use a body attribute tag of white (color="FFFFFF") as this is a SPAM trigger – emails default to white.
  - e. **DO NOT** use Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) or header style code. These are not read by email applications. If you must use style code, use inline style code only.
  - f. **DO NOT** use any JavaScript, frames, complex DHTML or header style coding. These do not work properly in many web based email applications and are caught by spam filters.
  - g. **DO NOT** use forms– they won't work in email applications.
  - h. **DO NOT** use image mapping. When the email envelope information is added the mapping coordinates are changed and are often misread or ignored by email applications ( especially by Hotmail/Live ) leaving the recipient with no clickable links on the image.
  - i. **DO** use simple/basic HTML code.
  - j. **DO** slice image into as many images as needed to have only one hyperlink wrapped around each image.
  - k. **DO** use ALT tags. The value in an ALT tag shows even when the images are turned off by the recipient's email application.
  - l. **DO** put values in all tags or remove the tags (no empty tags i.e. ALT="" )
  - m. **DO** use full absolute web address for image source and hyperlinks. i.e. http://....
  - n. **DO** use HTML numeric code for special characters (i.e. © = &#169)
2. Items to remember while designing the look and message of creative
  - a. **DO NOT** use white or light text on dark backgrounds - sometimes default settings will delete the background and the text will not be seen against the default white background.
  - b. **DO NOT** exceed file size of 50k for consumer or 75K for business emails. Larger files are scrutinized by spam filters.
  - c. **DO NOT MAKE YOU MESSAGE ALL GRAPHICS WITH NO TEXT.** Many email applications default to disable images so many recipients may never see your message. Be sure to have some copy in the top 1/3 of creative that can be read by recipients who have images turned off. It is strongly recommended that the email does not contain a higher ratio of image-to-text area. A lot of graphics will produce a higher SPAM score. No more than 30% of the design area should be images or graphics; the rest should be formatted text

- d. **DO** keep email width to 600 pixels or less. This is to accommodate web based email applications that give only 600 pixels in the area where emails are viewed.
  - e. **DO** put a call to action in the top 400 pixels of the email so it fits above the fold. Testing shows a better response rate when at least one call to action is near the top of the creative.
  - f. **DO** include an opt-out/unsubscribe link. This is required by CAN-SPAN Law. All commercial emails must include a way for recipients to opt out of receiving emails from the advertiser.
  - g. **DO** include the advertiser's physical address. This is required by CAN-SPAN Law. All commercial emails must include a physical address.
  - h. **DO** check your copy against the spam trigger words. See last page of this guide for a list of the most common words and phrase combinations that trigger spam filters to stop your message from reaching the recipient's inbox. Remove any you find and replace with other non-trigger word phrases.
  - i. Creative should include these four essential parts for better response rates. By making sure these four parts are in the creative as HTML copy (not images) in at least one place in the creative will ensure that, in the case of image blocking, the message of the email will still be readable. Secondary links using images is good – testing shows that the more than one link to the call to action in a creative results in higher click through rates.
    - Part 1: your headline (in HTML format, non image-based)
    - Part 2: your sub headline (in HTML format, non image-based)
    - Part 3: body copy (in HTML, non image-based)
    - Part 4: the click / call to action (HTML, non image-based)
3. Items regarding the CAN SPAM law to consider while creating your html and text copy:
- a. The subject line must accurately reflect the content of the message
  - b. The message must include the advertiser's physical postal address
  - c. Message must include opt-out link to you so you can keep list of emails that do not want to receive messages from you again. This becomes your suppression list for future email blasts.
  - d. For more details regarding the CAN SPAM regulations please visit [http://www.the-dma.org/antispam/E-mail\\_Chart.pdf](http://www.the-dma.org/antispam/E-mail_Chart.pdf)

### **Text Guidelines**

1. Text should be ASCII text of all the same size (10 to 12 pt. Arial Font). No colors, bold, italics, or embedded links should be included. Non-standard text, i.e. copyright logo, will not display properly. It is best to use and ASCII editor like MS Notepad. **DO NOT USE MS Word.**
2. We recommend that the body of text be 1 to 2 paragraphs with no more than 60 characters per line. IMPORTANT, press "enter" at the end of each line to maintain character length.
3. Keep justification to the left. Centered text or text set up to look aligned will render differently in each email application. You will get the best results keeping the text left justified.
4. All text creatives must use absolute address for hyperlinks (start with http:// or https://). Best if placed on a separate line to improve readability.

### **Subject line**

***The subject line is your chance to get the recipient to "open" your message.***

- Motivate your target audience in the subject line by mentioning the offer and/or benefit

- Avoid using subject lines that are too vague – be specific. To comply with CAN SPAM laws, the subject line must accurately reflect the content of the message
- Stay away from generic sales pitches – a clever or witty subject line can go a long way
- Avoid anything that could get you trapped in SPAM filters - (i.e: "FREE", "!", "\$", etc.)
- Try testing several subject lines to determine what is successful
- Always be honest with your subject line; don't bait and switch
- Consider using personalization
- Keep it short, less than 40 characters

### **Capturing Data:**

The data fields must be on a landing page. Use a link to go to the landing page where the recipient of the email can fill out information such as name, postal address, phone number. The recipient's email address will not be given to the client.

### **Tracking**

Online tracking will be set up automatically unless otherwise specified. When tracking is set up, your original links will look different (see examples next page). The links are changed so when the email recipient clicks on the link, it first directs them to our site to be counted, then to the customer's site. This will track how many times the link in the email is clicked on. Tracking openings of emails can only be done to an HTML broadcast and not for Text.

Examples:

Customer's original link: <http://www.autoshowinmotion.com/pls/asim/frmMain.show>

After tracking is installed: <http://content.emsnetwork.net/c.aspx?LK=49441&EM=>

### **Unique Id's**

1. If the client wants to track the individuals based on unique ids, we can pass this value to their URL as a query string and they can track at their end. (See example below)
2. If a client wants to assign a user name and password to each individual, the unique id field will be used to perform a mail merge when the campaign is sent.

[http://content.emsnetwork.net/c.aspx?LK=49441&EM=12345&UNIQUE\\_ID](http://content.emsnetwork.net/c.aspx?LK=49441&EM=12345&UNIQUE_ID)

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### **To Place Order:**

When you are ready to order, please confirm and forward your list selects and quantity desired along with the following:

- HTML message copy as .html file (images need to be hosted on your site so that they're visible when the .html file is open)
- Text message copy as .txt file (cannot be a Word .doc)
- Subject line. Per CAN-SPAM Law - must accurately reflect the content of the message.
- The "From" line. The name in the FROM line can be customized in most cases. Please supply a FROM name if you don't want our generic name showing.
- Test Seed List. Email addresses of others at your company who should receive test messages and copy of actual message as it's transmitted. Provide email addresses from major email companies so you can see how it looks when sent to AOL, Gmail, Yahoo, AT&T, Comcast, Outlook, etc.
- Any list of email addresses which you want to suppress from the rented email list (suppression list) (OPTIONAL)

Once we have received all these items we will process your order and confirm your broadcast date.

All first time mailers with Dunhill are required to prepay in advance of the transmittal. Payment must be received prior to set-up and broadcast. Here's the sequence: We select the list and send you our invoice. The email will be transmitted following receipt of your payment.