Data Science & Email
June 14, 2018
Attention.
How do you build repeat audience attention?
## Quantity of US-Based User Accounts (US, in Millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>153.3</td>
<td>158.4</td>
<td>162.9</td>
<td>167.2</td>
<td>171.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>98.9</td>
<td>106.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>64.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pinterest</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumbler</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>226.8</td>
<td>232.8</td>
<td>238.5</td>
<td>244.5</td>
<td>248.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It’s the best way to:

- own your audience
- cultivate relationships through repeatable interactions
- build and test models

Email also:

- Is relatively inexpensive <$0.01
- Has the highest ROI
- Is still growing

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Assumptions

1. Clear understanding of your audience
2. Acquisition plan with welcome series
3. Quality editorial product
4. Plan for monetization
Measuring Metrics and Analytics

- Open rates
  - Industry standard: ~22%
- Subscriber count
- Clickthrough rates
- Hard/soft bounce rates

- Metrics that don’t have a number
- List hygiene / using metrics to diagnose problems
Metrics and Analytics

● Challenge
  ○ Inconsistency in reporting and labeling
  ○ Current metrics do not provide sufficient audience and revenue insights

● A New Approach - The Shorenstein Center Notebooks
  ○ Use data science to slice and dice newsletter audience data, and build richer datasets
  ○ A research guide, just the beginning

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Available on Github: https://github.com/ShorensteinCenter

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Q: How big is your list?

A: List Composition

- Cleaned: 11%
- Pending: 39%
- Subscribed: 36%
- Unsubscribed: 14%
Proportion of current list by month joined

List Size --> List Composition

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Beyond Open & Click Rates

Number of subscribers active in the last 12 mo, 9 mo, 6 mo, 3 mo, 1mo, by month joined

Percent of subscribers 12 mo, 9 mo, 6 mo, 3 mo, 1 mo active, by month joined
Join Distributions

Open Rate vs. Join Time for Subscriber

Contour Plot

One Dimensional Distribution of X Axis

One Dimensional Distribution of Y Axis

Unique Open Rate

Higher

Lower

(Lower Open Rate, Older)

(Lower Open Rate, Newer)

(Higher Open Rate, Older)

(Higher Open Rate, Newer)

Older

Newer

Time Joined

Month Joined

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Consistency vs. Experimentation

- Personalization
- A/B testing
- Guest editors
- Reader surveys (revisit those “what to consider” points)
- Analyzing your data!
● Build vs Buy
● Double opt-in subscriptions
● Send from a real person's email account
● **Simple** templates, designed for **mobile**, with a focus on **user experience**
Best Practices

- Consistency in format so reader knows what to expect
- Optimized for mobile and various email clients
- Short, catchy subject lines
- Element of serendipity: avoid too much commoditized news that everyone else will have
- Make it clear a human put this together — write as if you’re talking to a (smart) friend
Thank You

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1. Selling your products to your list
2. Selling affiliate products to your list
3. Ads
   a. Newsletter sponsorship
   b. Remnant ads (least effort but also least reward)
   c. “Classified” ads
   d. Sponsored content copy (usually best reader experience)
4. Paid newsletter model
5. Membership
6. White-labeling
7. Renting your list

NOTE: Many newsletters employ more than one of these strategies
- Personality-driven newsletters with strong *writer-reader relationship*
- Pop-up newsletters for **big events**
Identifying and growing AN AUDIENCE
What to Consider First

- Why a newsletter?
- What's your goal?
- Who is your audience and what do they want?
- How do people find you?
- What's your voice, tone, frequency, length, etc?
Eliminate friction
Leverage existing channels
  ○ Don't promote the newsletter; promote the benefits.
Make it social:
  ○ Publish as a blog post or article
  ○ Word of mouth
Earn every subscriber
Here’s the secret...

- You're in the **relationship business**
  - Permission-based
- Make something people want
- Create more value than you capture
- Be human. Engage with your audience.

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