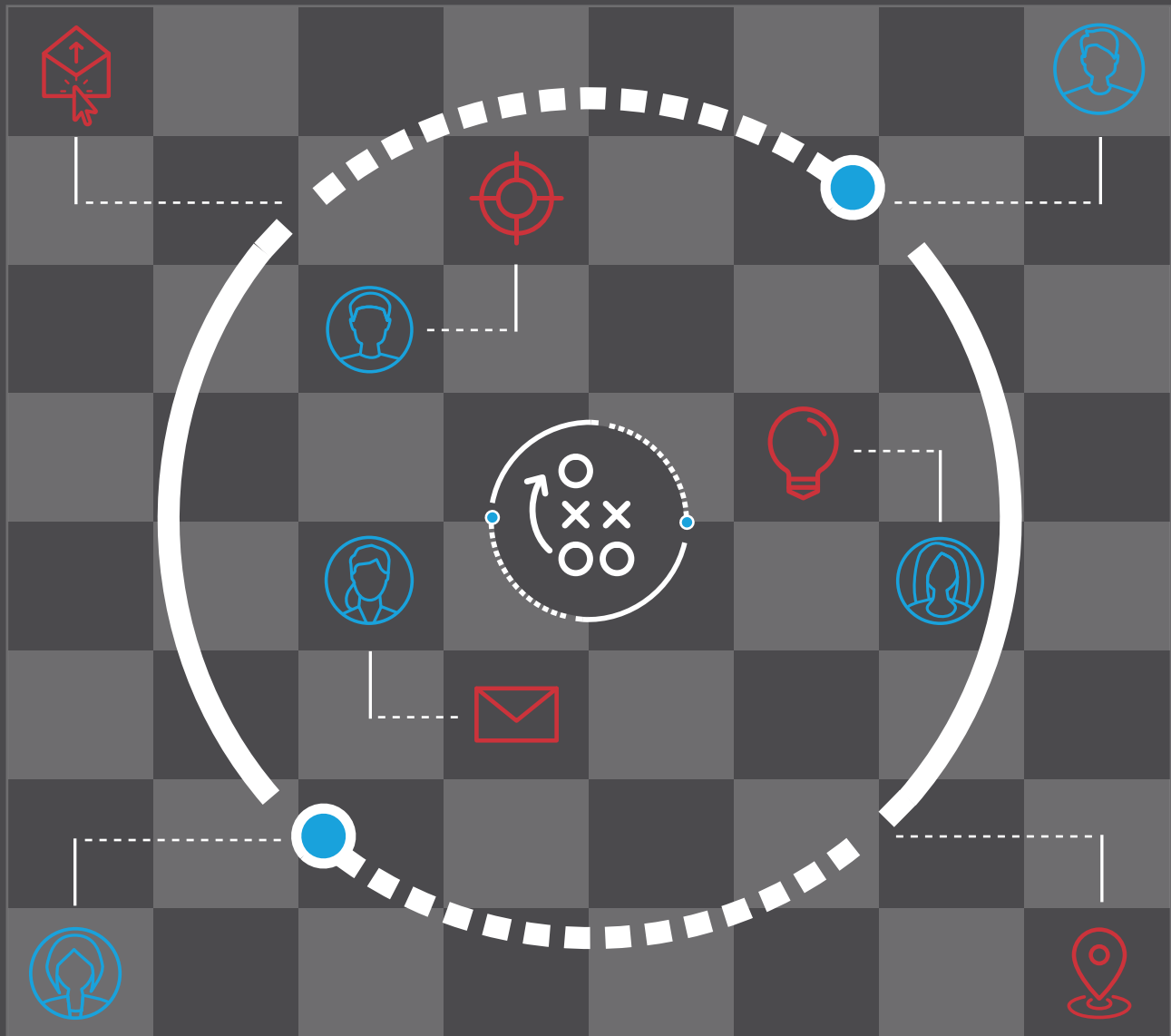# Email Marketing Campaign Strategies

For Optimizing B2C Marketing Performance

Return Path

Ascend2 research conducted in partnership with Return Path

Table of contents

Introduction

Its extensive audience and high ROI makes email the most effective marketing channel. However email's effectiveness is a privilege, not a right. In order to realize the full potential of email, your marketing team needs to implement and continuously fine tune an email marketing strategy.

To find out which strategies and tactics email marketing experts are implementing in their programs, Return Path in partnership with Ascend2 fielded the Email Marketing Strategy Survey. We interviewed 104 marketing influencers who conduct business in the consumer marketing and sales channel.

In this report—*Email Marketing Campaign Strategies for Optimizing B2C Marketing Performance*—we share the opinions of these influencers, including:

- Important strategic goals for a successful email marketing strategy
- Barriers to a successful email marketing campaign
- The most effective email personalization tactics
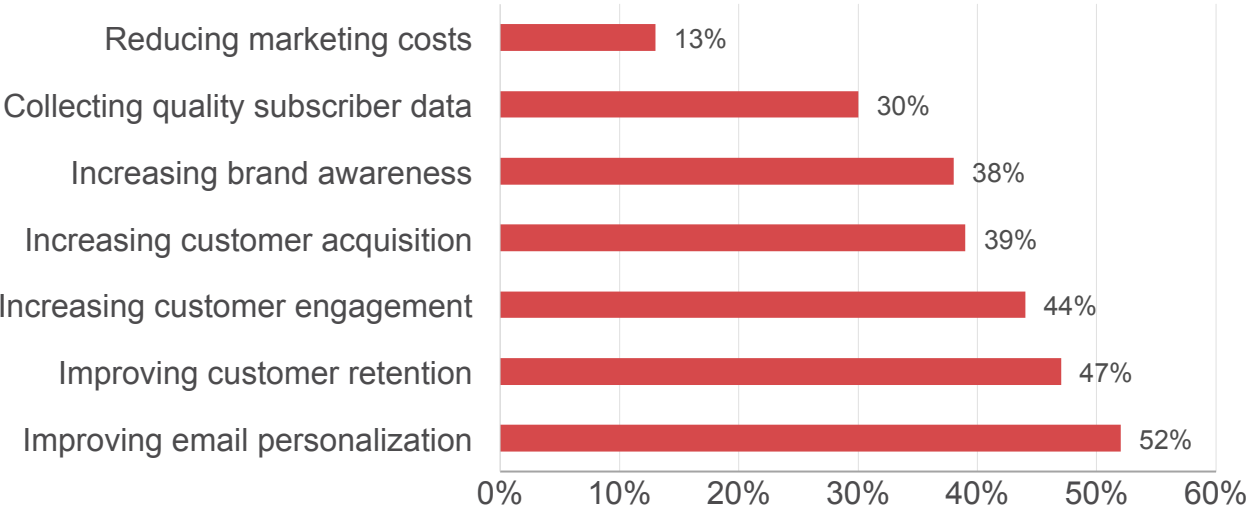- Which resources marketers use to execute their email strategy
- And more!

Feel free to put this research to work in your own marketing strategy. The charts may be used in your blogs or shared on social media, but please be sure to include the proper research credit.

Most important goals of an email marketing strategy

More than half (52 percent) of B2C marketing influencers said improving email personalization was their top email marketing priority. 47 percent and 44 percent of influencers value increasing engagement and improving customer retention, respectively.

What are the most important goals of an email marketing strategy?

| Goal	Percentage
Reducing marketing costs	13%
Collecting quality subscriber data	30%
Increasing brand awareness	38%
Increasing customer acquisition	39%
Increasing customer engagement	44%
Improving customer retention	47%
Improving email personalization	52%

Email Marketing Strategy Survey/B2C Benchmarks
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Rating email marketing strategy success

An impressive 87 percent of email marketing influencers consider their strategies as successful to some extent. More than half of those (45 percent of total) describe their email marketing strategy as "best-in-class" in comparison to their competitors.

Which best describes the success of your email marketing strategy compared to competitors?
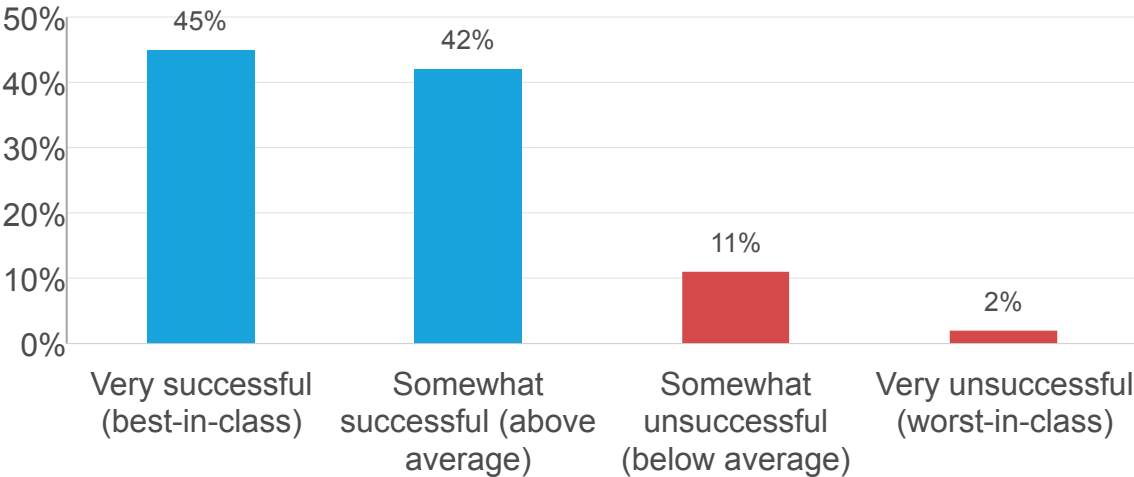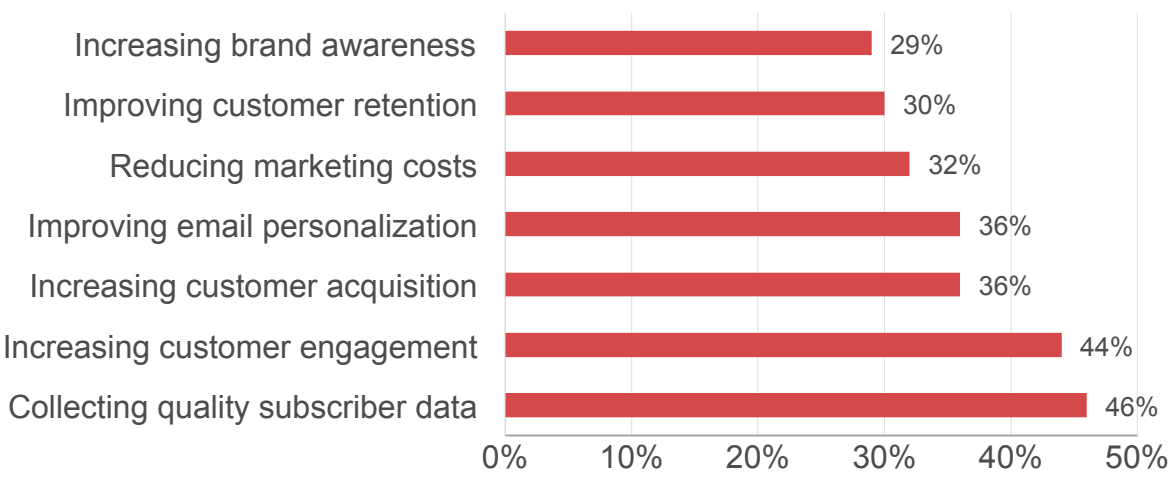

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Most significant barriers to strategic success

Collecting quality customer data (46 percent) and increasing customer engagement (44 percent) are the two most significant barriers to the success of a B2C email marketing strategy.

What are the most significant barriers to achieving email marketing success?

Barrier	Percent
Increasing brand awareness	29%
Improving customer retention	30%
Reducing marketing costs	32%
Improving email personalization	36%
Increasing customer acquisition	36%
Increasing customer engagement	44%
Collecting quality subscriber data	46%

Email Marketing Strategy Survey/B2C Benchmarks
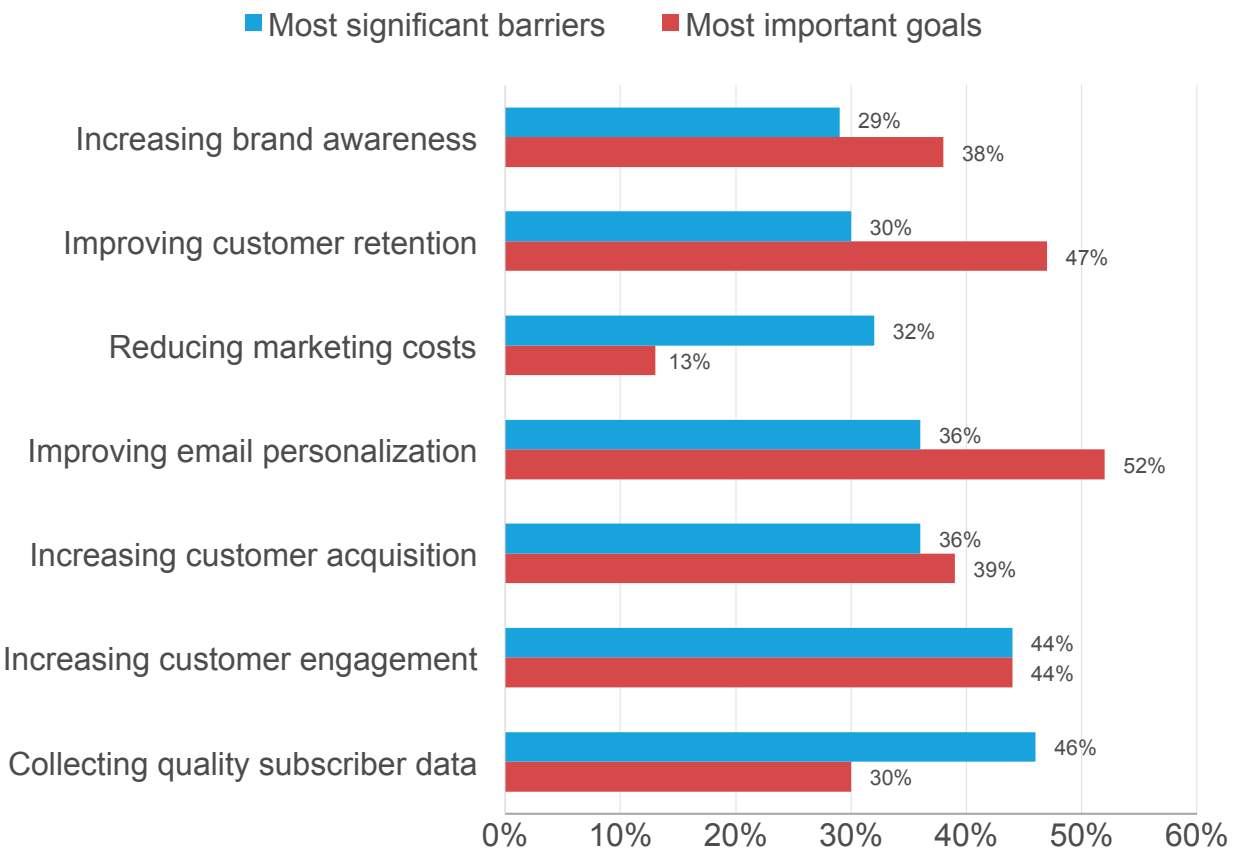Published November 2016 by Return Path in partnership with Ascend2

Comparing strategic goals and barriers

Some valuable goals are more easily achieved than others. When planning your email strategy, it is important to evaluate the challenges toward each goal alongside its value towards a successful email strategy.

Improving email personalization, improving customer retention, increasing brand awareness, and increasing customer acquisition are seen as goals more than they are viewed as barriers to success.

Comparative analysis of strategic goals and barriers

■ Most significant barriers   ■ Most important goals

Category	Most significant barriers	Most important goals
Increasing brand awareness	29%	38%
Improving customer retention	30%	47%
Reducing marketing costs	32%	13%
Improving email personalization	36%	52%
Increasing customer acquisition	36%	39%
Increasing customer engagement	44%	44%
Collecting quality subscriber data	46%	30%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%

How email marketing effectiveness is changing

Most (91 percent) of B2C marketing influencers agree that email marketing effectiveness is increasing to some extent, with about half of those (45 percent of total) describing the increase as significant.

To what extent is email marketing effectiveness changing?

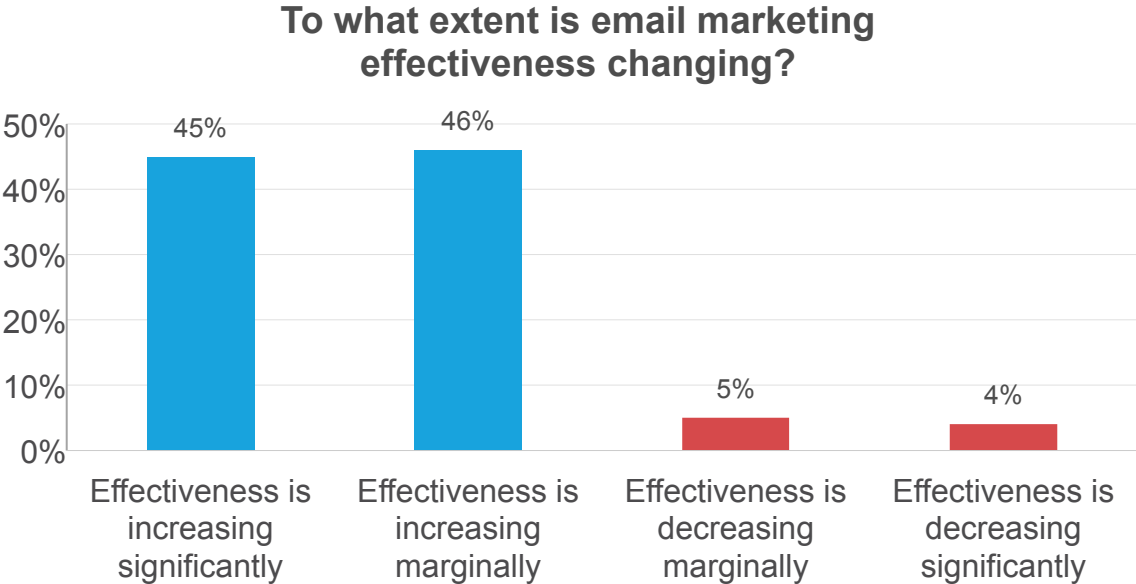Email Marketing Strategy Survey/B2C Benchmarks
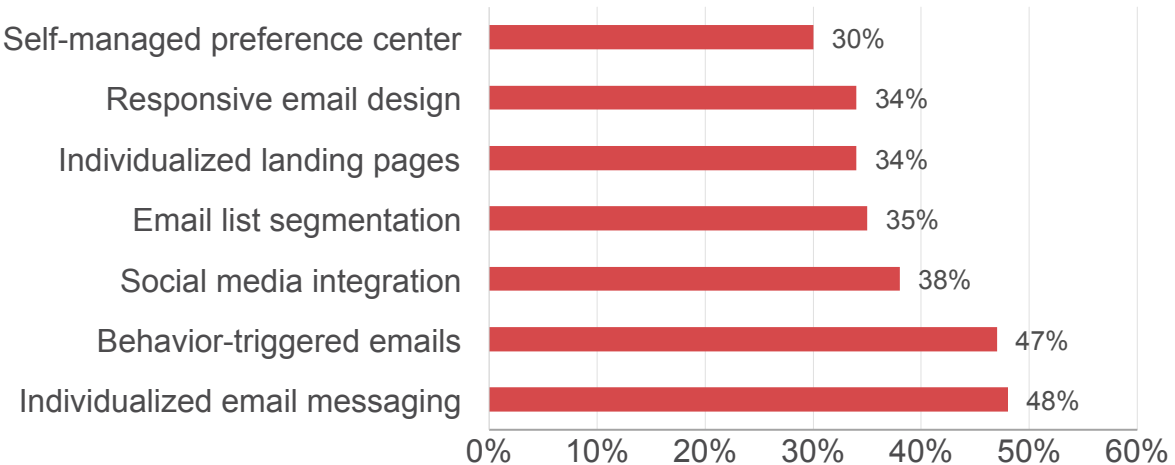Published November 2016 by Return Path in partnership with Ascend2

Most effective personalization tactics

Achieving the most important goal of a B2C email marketing strategy—improving email personalization—requires a plan of action utilizing the most effective tactics such as individualized email messaging (48 percent) and behavior-triggered emails (47 percent).

What are the most effective personalization tactics used for email marketing purposes?

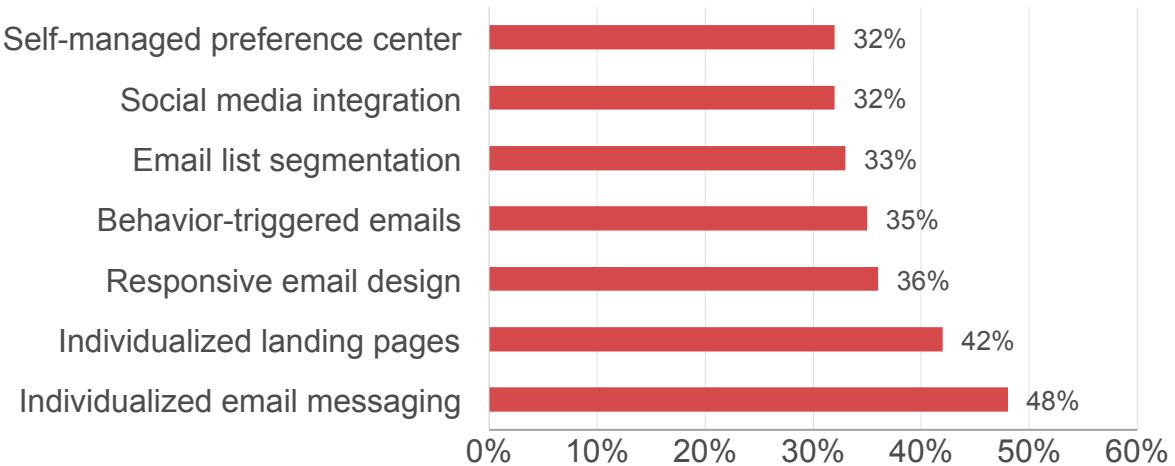| Tactic	Percentage
Self-managed preference center	30%
Responsive email design	34%
Individualized landing pages	34%
Email list segmentation	35%
Social media integration	38%
Behavior-triggered emails	47%
Individualized email messaging	48%

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Most difficult personalization tactics to execute

Individualized email messaging (48 percent) and landing pages (42 percent) are the most difficult personalization tactics to execute for B2C marketing purposes.

What are the most difficult personalization tactics to execute for email marketing purposes?

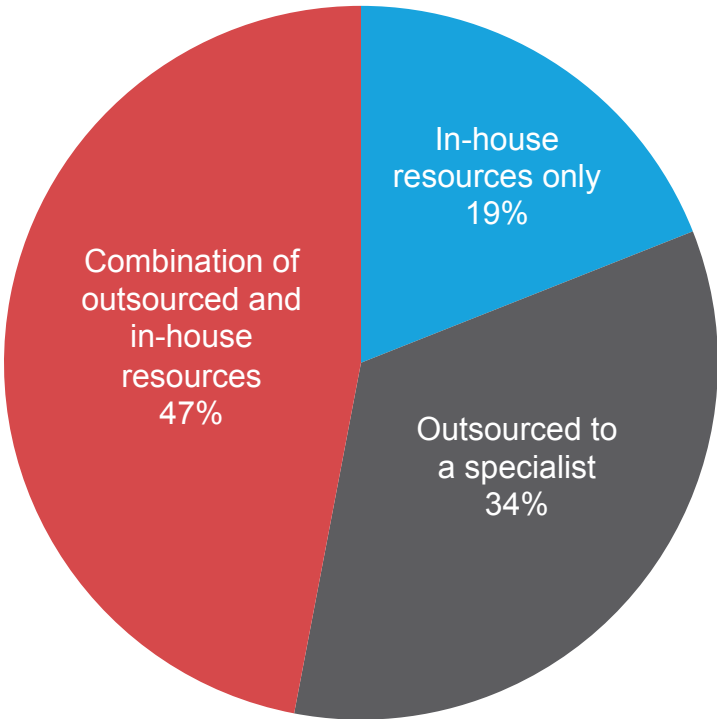| Tactic	Percentage
Self-managed preference center	32%
Social media integration	32%
Email list segmentation	33%
Behavior-triggered emails	35%
Responsive email design	36%
Individualized landing pages	42%
Individualized email messaging	48%

Email Marketing Strategy Survey/B2C Benchmarks
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Resources used to execute email marketing

Email marketing is difficult to execute. As the difficulty of the tactic increases, the more likely a company is to outsource, which explains why 81 percent of B2C marketers execute all or part of their email marketing tactics using external specialists.

Which best describes the resources used to execute email marketing tactics?

In-house resources only
19%

Outsourced to a specialist
34%

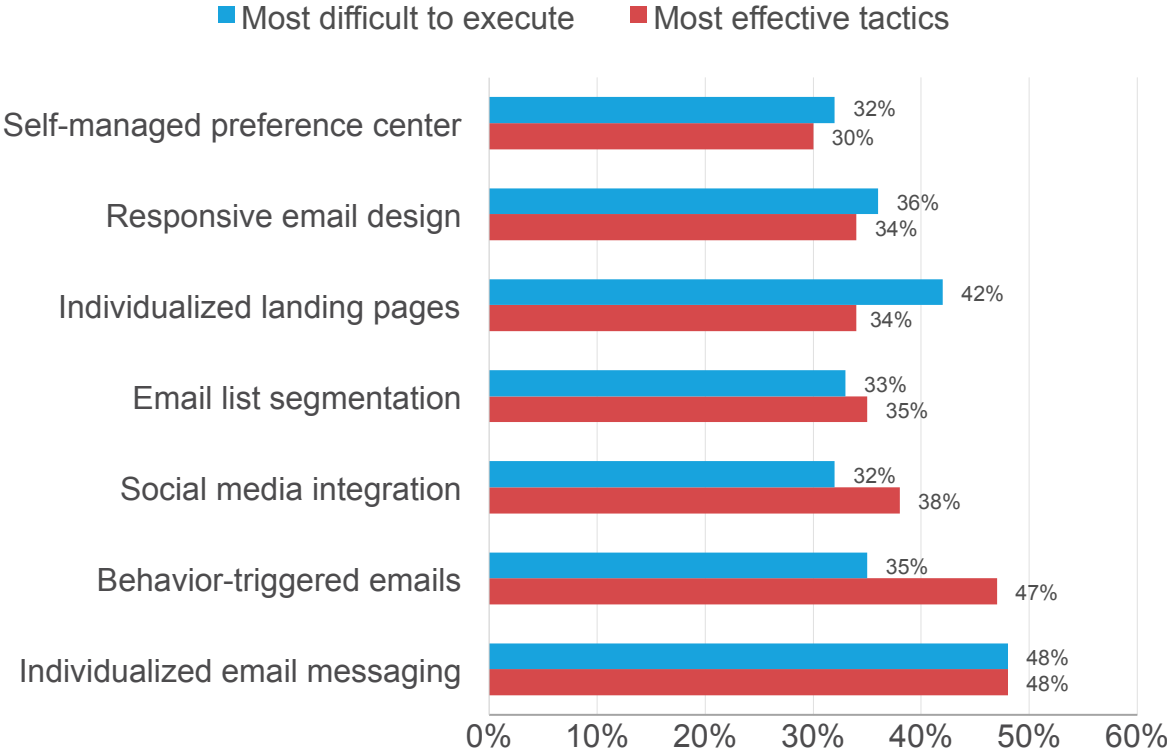Combination of outsourced and in-house resources
47%

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Comparing tactical effectiveness and difficulty

It's important to weigh the effectiveness and the difficulty of various tactics before you implement them into your strategy. According to email marketing influencers, the most effective tactic—individualized email messaging—is as effective as it is difficult (48 percent). Behavior triggered emails, social media integration, and email list segmentation are the only tactics whose effectiveness exceeds its difficulty.

Comparative analysis of tactical effectiveness and difficulty

■ Most difficult to execute ■ Most effective tactics

Tactic	Most difficult to execute	Most effective tactics
Self-managed preference center	32%	30%
Responsive email design	36%	34%
Individualized landing pages	42%	34%
Email list segmentation	33%	35%
Social media integration	32%	38%
Behavior-triggered emails	35%	47%
Individualized email messaging	48%	48%

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Strategies and tactics to get you started

The *Email Marketing Strategy Survey* uncovered a number of tactics that marketers believe are critical to a successful email marketing strategy. However, knowing which tactics to focus on isn't as important as understanding how to execute them well. Following are some tips and advice for improving three key areas of your email marketing program.

Customer acquisition: Acquiring new customers is ideal, but you need to make sure you are finding the right customers to add to your list. You want to find customers who are interested in your offers and love hearing from you. A low quality list can result in things like low open rates, high subscriber complaints, and bounces, which can all cause reputation issues, making it harder to reach the inbox. For ideas on how to grow a quality subscriber file, read our ebook, *50+ Ways to Grow Your Email List.*

Customer engagement and retention: Find out how your content is resonating with your subscribers by **tracking metrics** like read rate, complaint rate, and deleted without reading rate. By tracking the engagement metrics of each campaign, you can immediately identify poorly performing campaigns and respond to negative customer feedback, potentially saving a customer that would have **otherwise unsubscribed.**

Improving email personalization: Personalized emails are valuable tactic towards increasing ROI, customer engagement, and ultimately customer retention. Try these three ideas for determining how content should be personalized:

- *Ask for preferences:* There is no need to guess when you can simply ask. Add a link to a preference center in all of you emails. This allows customers to provide feedback on the type of experience they would like to have with your brand. Another tactic is to send an email that highlights your preference center, reminding customers they have input on your email relationship. Want some examples to get you started? Here we take a look at three brands unique approach to **collecting preference data**.

- *Segment:* Based on preference data you have collected as well as past engagement data, divide your list into different segments. By mailing to different segments you are able to create more personalized messages that are targeted to your customers rather than one overarching email that many customers won't find relevant.

- *Test:* Make sure you test before you send each campaign. This allows you to get customer preference feedback for each campaign before you deploy the message to your entire list. Every element in your email from timing to copy can be tested. Read the *A/B Testing Guide* to learn how and what to test.

About the research partners

Return Path analyzes the world's largest collection of email data to show businesses how to stay connected to their audiences and strengthen their customer engagement. Our data solutions help analysts understand consumer behavior and market trends. We help mailbox providers and security providers around the world deliver great user experiences and build trust in email by ensuring that wanted messages reach the inbox while spam and abuse don't. Learn more at returnpath.com

Marketing software and data companies, and digital marketing agencies partner with Ascend2 to reliably generate demand and supplement marketing content. Our Research Partner Programs are transparent – spotlighting your brand and the interests of your market. Learn more at Ascend2.com

Methodology

Ascend2 benchmarks the performance of popular digital marketing practices using a standardized questionnaire and proprietary 3-Minute Survey format.

This survey was conducted online from a panel of marketing influencers. This report represents the following participants:

Role in the Company

Owner / Partner / CXO	39%
VP / Director / Manager	52%
Non-Management	9%

Number of Employees

More than 500	45%
50 to 500	41%
Fewer than 50	14%