

Marketing activities are moving away from print and more toward electronic communications. Love them or hate them, HTML-based emails are more common than ever. Once you have a template, you can send your HTML-based email to your prospects and customers using your email client (such as Microsoft Outlook), or you can hire an email agency to do the distribution for you.

Template rules

Most web developers know that when developing websites they should use CSS as much as possible to separate content from layout. However coding HTML for use as an email template requires changing and in some cases even reversing good-coding rules to ensure that your email can be read by the widest range of email clients. Consider working with an experienced agency to develop your template. If you plan to code the HTML yourself, learn more about the things you can do to produce “emailable” HTML.

A good place to start is this WebReference.com article

(http://www.webreference.com/programming/css_html/). Following are some of the basics:

- Embed CSS for mark-up in individual elements (mixing the content in with the layout)
- Use tables instead of CSS for layout
- Do not place a background image in the <body> tag
- Use absolute URLs for all links and images
- The first tag in the HTML file should be the <html> tag

Links

Carefully consider the destination of each link in your email. Just “dumping” your visitors onto your home page means they will have to fend for themselves and hunt for the information they want. For example, if your email talks about a particular product, link directly to a page for that product.

Distribution with an email agency

There are many agencies that specialize in email distribution. These agencies usually can handle lists of any size, and can manage the opt-out and subscription features for you. They are often known as valid email agencies and so are not considered “spammers” by most ISPs, and can offer additional services such as variable text, link tracking, and more. If you work with one of these agencies, you will need to give them the HTML and all graphic files associated with your template (or URLs for the graphic files), and work with them to transfer your mailing list to them (unless they are obtaining a list for you).

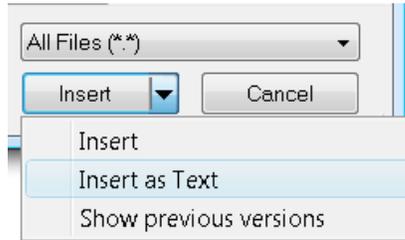
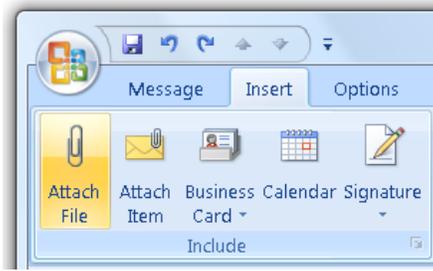
Frequently these agencies can go beyond merely sending emails, developing full e-campaigns, custom landing pages, and more. If you have the budget, this extra attention to your customer’s experience can go a long way toward converting leads to sales. After all, getting visitors to your site may be your immediate need, but turning visitors into customers is usually the end goal.

Distributing your email yourself

You may prefer to distribute your email yourself. Following are instructions for importing the HTML template into your own email client.

Microsoft Outlook 2007

1. Open a new email message. Delete any automated signature content from the message body so you have a completely blank message. From the "Insert" tab, select Attach File
2. This will open a Browse window for you to select the HTML file. Click on the file you want to insert, then click the black triangle beside the Insert button to select "Insert as Text"



Mozilla Thunderbird

Open your HTML file in Notepad or another text-only reader. Select all the text (Ctrl-A), then copy it (Ctrl-C).

1. In Thunderbird, open a new blank email message. From the menu, choose Insert>HTML:
2. This will bring up a small window. Paste the content of your HTML into this window (Ctrl-V). When complete, click the Insert button.

