

Effective Email Advertising

An Analysis of What Makes an Email Ad Blast to *Pharma Marketing News* Subscribers Effective

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John Mack (aka @Pharmaguy) is the Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of *Pharma Marketing News*—a periodic electronic newsletter focused on issues of importance to pharmaceutical marketing executives. *Pharma Marketing News* is published by the Pharma Marketing Network, which provides executive-level content coupled with unique advertising opportunities. Call John at 215-504-4164 or email him at johnmack@pharma-mkting.com if you have questions about options and prices for advertising via Pharma Marketing Network.

One of the most frequently asked questions about email advertising received by Pharma Marketing Network is similar to this one:

"You do a lot of conference blasts so I'm wondering if you could provide advice on how to get better open rates (what subject lines seem to work), and how did my click through compare to other conference producers?"

What makes an email ad effective depends on several factors. The subject line is just one. Other factors include the day of the week and the time of day the blast is sent, which is the subject of this report. See the end of the report for further suggestions on how to improve open rates for email ad blasts.

Questions Addressed in This Report

In order to determine which day of the week and time of day are optimal for sending out email ad "blasts" to *Pharma Marketing News* (PMnews) subscribers, we performed an analysis of our 2011 email advertising metrics. Specifically, we looked at the Open rates and Click-throughs to discover trends. The two questions we attempted to answer are:

- What's the best day of the week to send an email blast?
- What's the best time of the day to send an email blast?

Overview of Subscribers and Email Ads

Paid-advertising email blasts are sent to all PMnews subscribers who opted in to receive the ads as part of their free subscription service. The number of opt-in PMnews subscribers at the start of 2011 was 7,400; the number at the end of 2011 was 7,900. A total of 138 email blasts were made in 2011. Of these, 32 or 23% were "repeat" blasts, which are blasts sent to subscribers who did not open the first blast (see "Email Ad Options"; page E-1). This analysis excludes repeat blasts.

Definition of Terms

Email Deliveries. According to the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB), this metric attempts to answer the question, "How many valid Email addresses actually accepted my complete message?" It describes how many emails sent out were completely transferred to the intended recipient's mailbox without generating a "bounce" or other delivery error. The average number of *Pharma Marketing News* advertising email deliveries per blast in 2011—excluding repeats—was 7,555. The average bounce rate was 1.9%.

Unique Email Opens (UO). According to the IAB, this metric attempts to answer the question, "How many unique individuals viewed this Email campaign?" In our analysis, we calculate a UO rate, which is the ratio of unique opens to deliveries (i.e., UO/Deliveries) expressed as a percent (UO%).

Unique Email Click-Through (UC). According to the IAB, this metric attempts to answer the question, "How many unique people clicked on a link or multiple links within this Email?" To illustrate, if one person clicked on two links, this would only count as one unique click-through. If one person clicked on the same link twice, this would only count as one unique click-through.

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Click-to-Open Rate. This metric attempts to answer the question, "Of the Unique Email Opens, how many individuals took an action?" In our analysis, we express this as UC%.

What's the Best Day of the Week to Send an Email Blast?

How do UO% and UC% vary by day of week? As shown in Figure 1 (below), UO % stayed virtually constant over the course of the week. The UC rate, however, declines significantly after peaking on Tuesday with Friday having the lowest UC%.

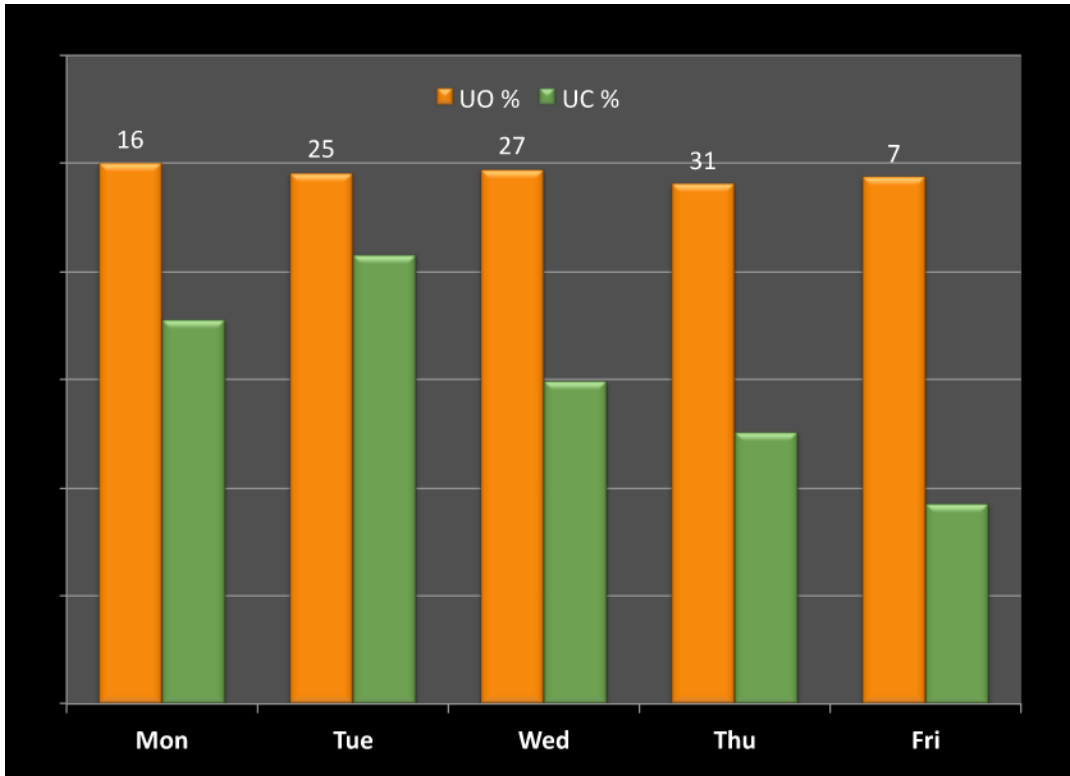


Figure 1. Open and Click-Through Rates for All Ads by Day of Week. The numbers above the bars indicate the number of blasts sent on that day of the week during 2011 (includes repeat email blasts). The actual UO% and UC% values are not shown (each horizontal line represents an increment of one percent). Clients receive these data as part of the service we provide.

The UC rate was greatest on Tuesday and declined about 28% relative to the peak on Wednesday, another 15% on Thursday relative to Wednesday, and 26% on Friday relative to Thursday. Perhaps subscribers become less interested in clicking on links as they get busier during the week and as the weekend looms.

Based on this analysis, all other variables being equal (and they rarely are), advertisers may wish to schedule email blasts to PMnews subscribers at the beginning of the week rather than on Thursdays or Fridays.

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What's the Best Time of the Day to Send an Email Blast?

We looked at UO% and UC% for email blasts sent at different times of the day. We divided the day into discrete time periods as shown in Figure 2 (below).

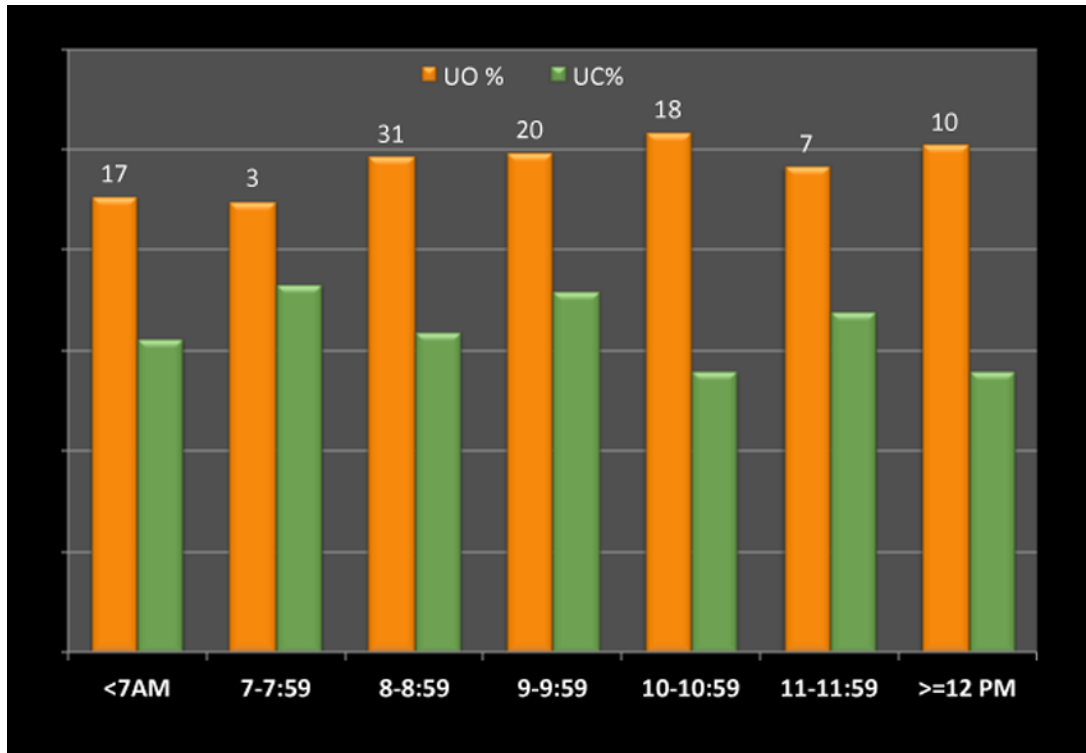


Figure 2. Open and Click-Through Rates for All Ads by Time of Day. The numbers above the bars indicate the number of blasts sent on that day of the week during 2011. The actual UO% and UC% values are not shown (each horizontal line represents an increment of one percent). Clients receive these data as part of the service we provide.

According to our analysis, the open and click-through rates do not vary greatly by time of day. Based on the limited data we have, we conclude that sending out blasts early in the day (Eastern US time) or just prior to lunch hour is optimal. However, this rule applies only to blasts intended for U.S. subscribers. We send out email ads before 7:00 am (Eastern US time) if the target audience is European.

How to Improve Email Ad Effectiveness

Although the analysis summarized above corroborates much that has been said about B2B email advertising from other sources, you should not depend solely upon these data to increase the chances that your email ad is opened and that links therein are clicked.

The best advice we can give to increase your open rates—other than choosing the right day of the week or time of day to send an email blast—is to make your email message specific to

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Pharma Marketing News subscribers. To help ensure success, we only send out ads that we believe will be of interest to our subscribers. Advertisers can also improve the success of their email ad blasts by offering our subscribers something special they haven't seen before such as special offers or discounts.

Often, advertisers give us the identical ad copy and subject line they have used for ads they have sent to other lists. Since some PMnews subscribers are probably subscribed to several lists, they may get the same exact message twice on the same day! That's not good for our subscribers or for our advertisers. We also suffer because once in a while a subscriber who receives duplicate messages will generate a spam report via Constant Contact, the email service we use to send out email blasts.

A few other suggestions for advertisers include:

1. Compose a message that is UNIQUE for PMnews subscribers.
2. Try mentioning "*Pharma Marketing News* subscriber" in your message or addressing the message to "Dear *Pharma Marketing News* subscriber."
3. If you can't change the message, at least use a UNIQUE subject line.

Make It Simple and Personal

It's expensive to create formatted, graphical versions of email messages with all the clickable buttons, graphics, and other "bells and whistles" that advertisers believe will increase open rates. We have a little secret for you: a simple Word-formatted document with perhaps your logo on the top for branding purposes signed by a real person may be more effective than stylish graphical messages.

Of course, the message still should be uniquely addressed to PMnews subscribers. We can help you do that. The point is, it is NOT expensive to rewrite your message in Word format. You don't have to pay any designer, graphic artist, or HTML programmer fees! Send us the Word document and we will create the HTML from it. It's still going to look like a simple Word document and will include formatting (ie. bold text, italics, etc.) plus links and graphics, but no unnecessary bells and whistles.

Regardless of the format of the message, each email blast includes a personal introduction from John Mack, the Editor and Publisher of *Pharma Marketing News*. In a Pledge to Subscribers and Advertisers (see <http://bit.ly/vAykHA>), Mack has said: "Because PMN subscribers are very valuable to me and to my advertisers, I will fight for special discounts for subscribers from advertisers and include a personal thank you and endorsement in the ad when such offers are made. These days, every one needs a break and I pledge to pass along as much savings as I can to my subscribers."

Anything advertisers can do to help us keep this pledge is bound to improve the effectiveness of email ad blasts.

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Get Social

Each *Pharma Marketing News* email ad blast includes a simultaneous Tweet made by @pharmaguy (aka John Mack) to over 10,300 Twitter followers (see a profile of Pharmaguy's followers here: www.pharmaguy.com). This tweet usually includes the subject line of the email ad and/or a personal note written by @pharmaguy plus a link to a Web page version of the ad. Note that the clicks on this online version of the email blast, which remains on the Pharma Marketing Network portal site (see page “Email Ad Options”; page E-1) for several weeks, are NOT included in the UC% data that was presented in this report.

Conclusion

We hope this report has given you some useful suggestions for improving the effectiveness of your email ads to *Pharma Marketing News* subscribers and to other lists you may be working with.

In summary, here are the recommended dos and don'ts to help ensure effective email ad blasts to *Pharma Marketing News* subscribers:

- DO send you ad early in the week
- DO make the ad specific for our subscribers
- DO make a special offer to our subscribers, when possible
- DO get personal (we help you do this)
- DO make it social (we help you do this)
- DON'T send the same ad to our list that you have sent to other lists (at least not on the same day!)
- DON'T include too many links. We can measure clicks on every link, but remember it's not really a numbers game; it's about directing subscribers to the most important information or offer.

If you are a current or past advertiser, you should have received delivery, open rate, and click-through data for the ads you sent to our list. We encourage you to analyze these data to determine what factors can increase the effective of your specific ads.

For more information about advertising via Pharma Marketing Network and *Pharma Marketing News*, please visit these online resources:

- PMN Advertising Information: <http://www.pharma-mkting.com/PMN-Advert.html>
- Pharma Marketing Network Advertiser News Blog: <http://pmnadnews.blogspot.com/>

See the following section— “Email Ad Options”—for more details about email advertising offered by Pharma Marketing Network plus current (2012) prices.

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Email Ad Options & Prices for 2012

Email ad “blasts” sent to all *Pharma Marketing News* subscribers are ideal for promoting special offers, events, white papers, product news, press releases, and job openings to this qualified list of pharmaceutical industry executives.

Our policy allows relevant paid promotional messages to be emailed to subscribers, who have opted in to receive such messages as a condition for a free subscription to *Pharma Marketing News*. Our subscribers are qualified pharmaceutical industry professionals (for details see “Profile of Our Subscribers, Followers, and Site Visitors”; <http://www.pharma-mkting.com/memberprofile.html>).

All ads are approved by the Editor and are sent by the Editor on behalf of our advertisers. Only a limited number of ads deemed relevant to subscribers are accepted.

Email ads can be enhanced via social media options listed in the following table.

| Option | Fee |
|--|-----------|
| <p>1. Dedicated E-mail Ad (formatted HTML and text versions) sent to approx. 8,000¹ opt-in <i>Pharma Marketing News</i> subscribers. Each email ad includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One insertion in the PMN Sponsor Widget (see Figure 1, pg E-2), which is displayed on Pharma Marketing Blog (http://pharmamkting.blogspot.com/), Pharma Marketing Network Forums (http://www.forums.pharma-mkting.com), Online Conference Calendar page (http://www.meetings.pharma-mkting.com), and other pages throughout the network (average widget views per day = 1,200). The listing within the widget includes the subject line of the email ad, short ad summary, and a link to the HTML version of the complete ad posted on the PMN portal site. • A short ad summary and link to a Web version of the ad posted to the PMN Advertiser Messages forum (http://bit.ly/PMFads), which greatly improves search engine visibility of the ad. • One tweet to over 10,700¹ @pharmaguy Twitter followers. The tweet includes a summary of the ad and a link to the Web version. It may also include specific hash tags relevant to particular audiences. | \$ 625.00 |
| <p>2. Repeat Email Ad blast sent to subscribers who did not open previous blast. Exact same ad copy as first blast. Option to change subject line. See http://bit.ly/9GjmG7</p> | \$ 275.00 |
| <p>3. Social Media Campaign. includes 6 scheduled Twitter posts (i.e., “Tweets”) to over 10,400¹ @pharmaguy followers. Tweets can focus on specific items of interest in the email ad and link to the HTML version of ad posted on the PMN portal site or directly to the client’s site/Web page. Tweets may include client-specified hash tags and/or keywords. Client reviews & approves Tweets before they are posted.</p> | \$ 425.00 |
| <p>4. Sponsored Forum Announcement: A copy of the email blast (HTML or plain text version if HTML not available) posted as an announcement displayed at the top of a selected PMN Forum (unit = 1 insertion; term = 1 Month, after which announcement expires). See Figure 2 on page E-3.</p> | \$ 95.00 |

¹Data current as of 1-JAN-2012. Approx. 100 new subscribers and 200 new followers are added every month.

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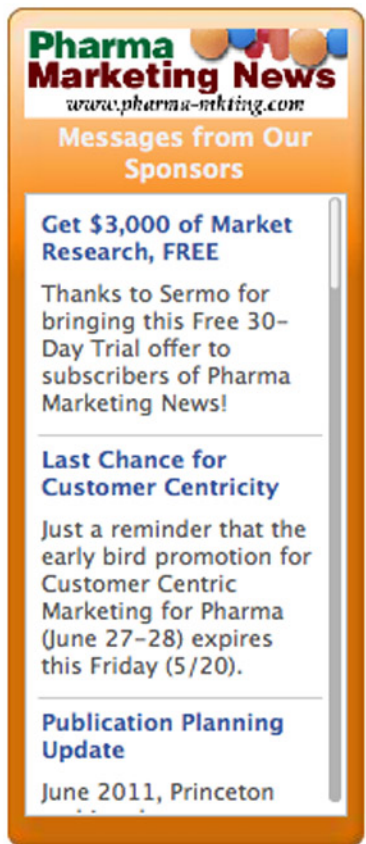



Figure 1. Sponsor Widget. Includes email ad subject line plus short summary of ad. Clicking on the subject line leads to the Web version of the e-mail ad (see Figure 2).

Pharma Marketing News PHARMA MARKETING NEWS AD SUPPLEMENT
 23 May 2011

Thanks to Sermo for bringing this interesting offer to subscribers of *Pharma Marketing News*.

John Mack, Editor
editor@news.pharma-mkting.com



Free 30-Day Trial

For a limited time, you can get access to Sermo's community of 120,000 physicians, FREE for 30 days (a \$3,000 value).

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 24% of online MDs have visited Sermo

F5TCOMPANY
 Top 10 most innovative healthcare company.

BusinessWeek
 Lists Sermo among the 50 best tech startups.

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PHARMA MARKETING NEWS AD POLICY
 Our policy allows relevant paid promotional messages (Ads) to be emailed to subscribers, who have opted in to receive such messages as a condition for a free subscription to *Pharma Marketing News*.

All ads are approved by the Editor and are sent by the Editor on behalf of our advertisers. Only a limited number of ads deemed relevant to subscribers are accepted. The subject line of each email ad accurately reflects the content of the ad.

If you are interested in placing an ad in *Pharma Marketing News*, please find more information on the Pharma Marketing Network Advertising Information Page, call 215-504-4164, or email sales@pharma-mkting.com

CONTRIBUTE ARTICLES
 Do you wish to contribute an article? E-mail the editor of *Pharma Marketing News*, at editor@news.pharma-mkting.com. Please see [Author Guidelines](#) for instructions.

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Figure 2. Web Version of Email Ad. This is exactly the same as the HTML version of the ad sent by to subscribers via email. The Sponsor Widget (Figure 2) links to this page. The free tweet links to a similar Web version of the ad.

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News Direct from Drug Industry New that comes directly from pharmaceutical company communications departments or their agents and from PhRMA, the industry's trade group in the US.

New Thread Page 1 of 253 1 2 3 11 51 101 > Last »

Threads in Forum : News Direct from Drug Industry Forum Tools Search this Forum

Announcement: Get \$3,000 of Market Research, FREE
 Melissa Burke (Member)

Click to view Announcement

| Thread / Thread Starter | Rating | Last Post | Replies | Views |
|--|--------|---------------------------------|---------|-------|
| Amgen: Amgen Announces Voting Results of Annual Meeting & Stockholders http://bit.ly/Amgen | | 20th May 2011 06:37 PM by Amgen | 0 | 35 |
| JNJComm: Here's a p... Checking in on friends JNJComm | | | | |
| JNJComm: The US FD... TMC278. Press Releas... JNJComm | | | | |
| pfizer_news: SUTENT... pancreatic neuroendoc... Pfizer_News | | | | |

Announcements in Forum : News Direct from Drug Industry
 21st May 2011 until 21st June 2011

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Sermo is the **largest MD-only online community in the US** where you can use surveys and focus groups to get key insights and answers to strategic questions, including:

- How do physicians feel about current products and what opportunities are there for improvement?
- How are physicians reacting to my new product?
- How can my company develop better relationships with physicians?

manhattanRESEARCH
24% of online MDs have visited Sermo

FSTCOMPANY
Top 10 most innovative healthcare company.

BusinessWeek
Lists Sermo among the 50 best tech startups.

Activate FREE Trial

Melissa Burke
 Director, Strategic Partnerships
 Mburke@sermo.com
 1.877.778.3963
 www.sermo.com/client

Join Date: May 2011
 Location: USA
 Posts: 0

Figure 3. Sponsored Forum Announcement. The announcement appears at the top of the desired forum (e.g., “News Direct from Drug Industry”). Clicking on the title of the announcement, which may be the subject line of the email blast, opens up the announcement. The content and format of the announcement is identical to the email ad. The announcement appears to be posted directly by the advertiser under a specific name (or alias) and signature, which can include contact information as shown.