

# WHITEPAPER

## Top 10 Mobile Device Design Tips for Email

In case you haven't noticed, mobile devices are literally everywhere. We're texting more than ever, shopping online, downloading apps, playing games, tracking workouts, updating Facebook, tweeting, and doing a lot more right from our personal mobile devices. Perhaps the most popular and important activity that keeps us connected to work, friends, family and businesses alike is email.

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Mobile access now accounts for 16 percent of how people read their email, according to Return Path. That might seem like a small percentage, BUT savvy marketers need to think about how their email marketing is and will be affected by this growing trend. So now, we're not just worrying about overcoming spam filters, we also need to think about how email will be viewed, when will it be relevant, what action will they take and on what device?

The evolution of mobile email marketing can be overwhelming and daunting as we try to develop a design template that works across all platforms. Although there is no common template that fits all mobile browsers optimally, using common sense and best practice techniques, we can satisfy the needs of the large screen user and the mobile user in one single design. There's no need to spend valuable resources trying to determine what device consumers are using since it's a variable you'll never really pinpoint in prospecting. The best advice is to create emails that all mobile users can read and act on just as easily as desktop users.

This document will provide **10 tips** that will help adapt email designs for mobile users and at the same time satisfy your desktop users. In fact, most of the advice leads to designing emails that are scaled down and cleaner. Based on our experience a clean and simple design is one of the best solutions to overcoming spam filters for prospect email marketing.

Here are some simple solutions to help you produce a better looking email creative that's more accessible and will render for both desktop and mobile email clients:

## Tip #1: Pixel Width

For average desktop computers, we recommend conventional emails to be set up with a fixed width between 550-600 pixels. Most marketing emails and newsletters are designed to that specification. However, mobile email readers are much smaller. The premium devices on the market are just under 500 pixels, but most common mobile email readers are in a range of 320 pixels.



Today the iPhone may be considered the gold standard for Smartphones which allows for a 300-pixel width when held vertically and a 480-pixel width in landscape format. iPhones resize emails to fit their screens, BUT other Smartphones don't, so it makes sense to design for lowest common denominator. The benefit is not only to ensure the recipient sees as much of your email as possible, but to limit the aggravation of scrolling side to side to read an email. Aim for 450 pixels if you want one template for both desktop and mobile users.

## Tip #2: Add a link for a mobile-friendly web version

You can include a mobile friendly url link at the very top of an email, also known as the pre-header area. This would be a link to a hosted online text version of your email that is optimized for mobile users with limited text and images. This is considered the easy and safe default option, but it doesn't provide a rich and compelling email creative for the user. It also requires additional clicks by the user which has been shown to hinder response rates. Also, many template driven email service providers may not offer options to host a mobile version. There are several providers, including V12 Group, that

can accommodate mobile devices and keep ahead of the trend of changing mobile specifications.

### Tip #3: Effectively use the pre-header

A pre-header is basic text that can be found at the very top of your email. There are 2 schools of thought regarding pre-headers and mobile devices, both of which should be tested. The first is that hand-held devices make the use of pre-headers a necessity since its prime real estate where you want to include key information and offer specific details that entice the consumer to read on. Some marketers use text phrases (i.e. Click here if you cannot see images, or Add us to your safe senders list) However, since this is likely the first thing a prospect reads it makes sense to highlight your offer or promotion.



The second theory is to eliminate the pre-header altogether since it pushes the email creative down the screen and less of the email is visible. Our best advice and compromise is to keep pre-header text to one or two short lines so the email creative is visible while still highlighting your best offer copy.

### Tip #4: Use a single-column ladder design

Sidebars and 2-column designs are the gold standard for desktop creative since you have 2 separate areas to put your best offer copy so that it appears at the top of the email preview pane where it's more likely to be noticed. This is known as the "above-the-fold" area and commonly where your headline appears. However, a mobile device will likely shift the columns, text, images and create overlapping areas which is clearly a poor presentation. The single column design keeps it simple with no rendering

issues to contend with, no columns being pushed into text, and images aligned as you intended.

Using a ladder system allows emails to scale down much more neatly. You want to avoid using tables or setting image size widths to ensure that the email is 'elastic' and adjust to the size of the mobile screen. You'll also want to group multiple items, links, and images on top of each other (like a ladder). You can then use background colors within the email itself to serve as dividers between the different sections. This stacking system allows for easy organization and alignment with limited rendering snafus. The end goal is to lead your reader down the email through the content.

## Tip #5: Padding for fingers in motion

Point and click motions are fluid and precise when done on a computer mouse connected to a desktop or laptop, whereas mobile devices use touch screen technology and the human finger becomes a factor. Email designers need to anticipate how fingers will navigate the clickable areas of an email on a touch screen. This would mean buttons and icons need to get a little larger and the surrounding areas need to be more padded to accommodate for fingertips in motion. Allow for 10 pixels (give or take) around or in-between any clickable area to leave space and make it easy for users to navigate and click to take action.

## Tip #6: Font sizes

Another design tip for clumsy fingers is to use a minimum font size of 12 pt for body copy and keep headlines around 20 pt. Any larger and you risk your email landing in the junk folder for desktop users since some filters flag larger fonts used in email as spam. Keep in mind that the larger font means you'll have to keep your content brief. You'll most likely be able to fit 10-12 lines of text on a screen.

## Tip #7: Flush left

Set all text to align to the left so it appears on the left side of the mobile device where it's easiest to read. This will prevent text from getting pushed to the center or right of the phone forcing users to scroll in order to view and read the email.

## Tip #8: Images and alt tags

Image to text ratio is another factor to contend with when dealing with spam filters so a 60/40 text to image ratio should be maintained for best results. Image sizes need to be considered because a mobile device will not load images as fast as a desktop or laptop. Try to keep the size of each of your images at 20k or less and the overall file size of the email should not exceed 50-70k. Do not use Flash or gif animations, they will not work and just add to the overall file size of an email. Keep it simple.

Header banners are the most common image to appear in an email and they run across the very top. They illustrate a brand, an offer or theme depending on the graphics used. Ensure that the banner is set to the same size as the pixel width of the email and it will appear at 100%. Set the height of the banner to control how it will render on the mobile screen. It should be no larger than 125 pixels high. Any deeper and the text portion of the email will be pushed farther down on the screen and may not even be visible.

Alt tags are snippets of text associated with an image and are commonly used in email so that before an image loads, the user has an idea of what the image is, what the offer might be, or the overall theme of the email. Keep it short.

## Tip #9: Go back to the basics

This tip might seem a little basic but the core principles of email marketing 101 will still apply in order for your email to be effective, so they need repeating. No matter what the design, layout, or offer, always ensure you're from line and subject line quickly

communicate two critical points: **Branding** (who you are) **and Offer** (the value in your email) The straight-forward presence and recognition of both the sender and the email's value drive open rates and responses—no matter what the viewing device.

## Tip #10: Become mobile-friendly from A to Z



You can't just stop at the email. The most effective campaigns have a supporting landing page that reinforces the offer from your email promotion. So you've spent all this time, effort and energy creating a mobile friendly email which means the landing page will need to be optimized as well. In fact, many marketers have a mobile-optimized version of

their entire website. This is smart given the statistics we're seeing on the mobile front and IF you're looking to see some serious conversion rates for your email programs.

Making it easy to click-through a well-designed mobile email that leads to an easy to navigate landing page can help improve ROI. Many of the tips above will apply to the landing page design, but you'll be working from a larger width for a landing page. We suggest 640 pixels wide since it's cleanly divided by 2 and a good canvas to develop a mobile friendly page that's easy to navigate.

## Conclusion

Gone are the days when one of the goals for email marketers was to encourage mobile users to save an email for later viewing on a home computer that better supports the email design. You need to think of every email as your one shot to get it right for everyone, no matter if they are in line at the store, at a baseball game, or home on the big screen.

An email needs to not only look good, but offer a compelling promotion that's relevant to the user. You can opt to design a mobile version of each email for the more popular devices, but this will be very time-consuming, cumbersome and costly. Just use these simple tips that can help you design a template to render on both desktop and mobile email clients.

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