

Law firm email marketing open rates have dropped in the last two years, so making your emails pertinent and interesting is important to getting your message read.

eLaw Marketing recently released the results of a comprehensive study called, “The State of Law Firm Email Marketing – Benchmarks, Trends and Best Practices.” This report benchmarks five key performance metrics generated by email marketing campaigns aggregating 6,896,610 emails distributed by their 25 most active law firm clients during four consecutive 6-month periods running from July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2010. I wanted to pass along some of their insights regarding open rates and offer some advice on how to surpass the average with your communications.

First of all, I’m frequently asked what is a “good” open rate, and it’s a hard question to answer. A lot depends on the quality of your list, the content of your email and its timing. But according to this study, today’s average open rate is around 21% for law firm emails. This is down from an average of nearly 28% two years ago. This can be blamed, in part, on email overload, but there are ways to raise the chances that your email will get opened. Here are a few things to consider:

- **Capture Interest with Good Subject Lines:** Keep your subject line short, compelling and interesting. You don’t have to tell the whole story of your email in the subject line. Keep in mind, the goal is to make it interesting enough that the recipients will want to learn more, not to tell the whole story. Don’t over-promise or mislead in your subject line, but this is where some creativity is very important.
- **Target Appropriately:** To get higher open rates, target your emails to those on your list that would be the most interested in the topic. There will be times when you want to send everyone the same email. But most of the time, it pays to narrow the recipient list to those most affected by the topic. For example, if there is a new change in employment law, you may want to target c-level employees and HR directors, whereas an email on a new tax requirement may go to CFOs and controllers. It takes more time, and more list management, but in the end, it will pay off.
- **Time Well:** We all deal with inbox overload, so timing your emails is important too. Sending too many emails can work against you. Try to create a calendar of email blasts, and stick to it. This will keep you from being perceived as spam. If your message is time-sensitive, by all means send it out off schedule, but make sure it’s going to those that are directly affected by the topic too. By sending pertinent, interesting content, your **readers** will do just that, **read** your email.

By following these few simple rules, you’ll be that far ahead of all the other firms out there.