

How to Code HTML Email Newsletters - Presentation Transcript

1. How to Code HTML Email Newsletters
2. The Big Picture
 - Overview
 - Step 1: Code with HTML Tables
 - Step 2: Use Inline CSS
 - Step 3: Testing
 - Step 4: Delivery
 - Best Practices
 - Resources
3. Email Software Clients <http://www.campaignmonitor.com/stats/email-clients/> 12 months and 500,000,000 email opens
4. HTML Email Design Constraints
 - Limited to email client preview window
 - Images often blocked initially
 - Can't cram a web page into narrow email width
 - Less design works best: clear call to action, fewer headings, tight branding, less copy and images
 - The From, Subject line, and other micro-copy are what readers use to determine whether or not to open an email, NOT THE EMAIL DESIGN (sorry)
5. What You're Up Against
6. What You're Up Against
7. Email Software Clients <http://www.emailonacid.com/blog/details/C6/strategies-for-email-testing>
Email software and engine they use to render/interpret HTML:
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9. Layout Strategies http://webimages.mailchimp.com/img/resources/template-howtos/blueprint_1.jpg
10. Layout Strategies
11. Step 1: Use Nested HTML Tables
 - `<table border="0" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0" width="98%" >`
 - `<tr>`
 - `<td>`
 - `<table border="0" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0" width="500" >`
 - `<tr>`
 - `<td>`
 - ... content here ...
 - `</td>`
 - `</tr>`
 - `</table>`
 - `</td>`
 - `</tr>`
 - `</table>`
12. Step 1: Use Nested HTML Tables
 - One HTML frame table to rule them all as a pseudo-body
 - DIVs that float don't always work
 - SPANs almost always work
 - Fixed width works better than fluid for non-frame tables
 - 500 pixels wide is optimal
 - Use border="1" to debug HTML table layout problems
 - Spacing problems? Start with TDs

- Mystery gap under image? Pull </td> up flush with the image in one line of code (an ancient HTML bug): <td></td>
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14. Step 2: Use Inline CSS
- <table border="0" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0" width="98%">
 - <tr>
 - <td>
 - <table border="0" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0" width="500">
 - <tr>
 - <td style="margin:0 0 0 0;padding: 0 0 0 0;" >
 - <p style="color: #000000;font-family:Arial; font-size: 12pt; line-height: 18pt;" > ...content here ... </p>
 - </td>
 - </tr>
 - </table>
 - </td>
 - </tr>
 - </table>
15. Use Inline CSS
- Gmail strips out internal stylesheets
 - Some webmail clients strip out any CSS not inline
 - External stylesheet(s) work sometimes but not universally
 - Use IMG alt, title, height, width tags to handle email clients that do not display images
 - Background images do not always work
 - Bottomline, always inline your CSS
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17. Testing Your HTML Email
- Test first in browsers: IE 6/7/8, Firefox, Safari, Chrome, Opera
 - Analyse your list for most common domain names (e.g. @gmail.com)
 - Ignore your list analysis, it's probably inaccurate (e.g. POP3 lets people read Gmail in Outlook, Notes/Outlook is invisible or tough to identify)
 - Use test accounts and email delivery services to see how your email displays across email clients
 - Email service providers sometimes include spam tests for your email code and copy
 - Bottomline: basic code always works
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19. ESP vs DIY
 - Send email with Email Service Providers (ESPs) or DIY?
 - Always send through ESPs: it's their job to get their emails white-listed and avoid black lists. Cost is marginal.
 - Internet access providers have a threshold that will cut off your internet access because you're a "spammer" sending 313 emails with Outlook when threshold is 312 emails
 - [Insist on sending bulk email from Outlook? Create a signature template with your html email code then add the signature to your email.]
20. Email Service Providers (ESPs)
 - Break into three cost tiers: low, medium, and high cost. Cost is by email sent or monthly fee.
 - Evaluate ESPs on white list and blacklist process, spammer policies (do they kick people off?), client testimonials, additional services (free templates, spam tests, testing email clients), list restrictions, then cost
 - Test their email signup code on your site: ConstantContact, as of summer 2009, made visitors fill signup form twice
 - Create your HTML email then paste into the ESP new email form and test send to your test accounts
21. Email Service Providers (ESP)
 - Low and medium cost ESPs to consider:
 - Bronto.com
 - CampaignMonitor.com
 - ConstantContact.com
 - CoolerEmail.com
 - iContact.com
 - MailChimp.com
 - MyEmma.com
 - ... and many, many, many others ...
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23. Code That Triggers Spam Filters
 - 1 pixel transparent graphics used to place images precisely (circa 1990s HTML trick)
 - Email is one image with no copy in email
 - Javascript anywhere in email
 - Forms (sometimes)
24. Code for HotMail, Gmail, Yahoo!
 - target="_blank" for all anchor tags/links
 - Frame table width="98%"
 - No unnecessary white spaces in TDs
 - Set IMG to style="display: block" (HotMail)
 - Style headings at H1, H2, H3 levels
 - Check float, margin, padding definitions
 - All CSS inline (Gmail)
 - No PNG images (LotusNotes)
 - Put between empty TD open/close tags: <td> </td>
 - Outlook 2007 does not recognize IMG alt= element: use title= element in all cases
25. Common HTML Email Techniques
 - Can you do these things?
 - Intra-page links (Sometimes)
 - Background images (Sometimes): use HTML background= in TDs first, same for bgcolor= in TDs for background colors
 - Video (Sometimes): Apple Mail works, need placeholder image/link for everyone else

- Forms (Depends): can trigger spam filters
 - Image Maps (Yes, but why?)
 - Colored links: use inline style definition for A tags AND span nested between A tags
 - Underline links on hover...Sorry, no a: hover support
26. Email Micro-Copy
- Micro-copy is the biggest factor in trust, open rates, and people not reporting email as spam
 - From and Subject should be consistent to make sorting easy
 - Subject should have a constant prefix (e.g. News Roundup)
 - From should have a human name with company name in parens, for example, "Fred Flintstone (Bedrock Gravel)" or company name, never a bare email address
 - Always include at top of emails an unsubscribe message/link and possibly a link to the web version of the email
 - Unsubscribe message/link also should say how you got their email address: this dramatically reduces spam complaints
27. Don't Forget Plain Text Email
- Can help reduce spamminess when bundled with HTML email (Europe requires HTML email include text version)
 - Use repeated characters (e.g. ==, ++, or __) to divide sections of content
 - Use white space to make it easy to scroll/read
 - Short headlines and copy with link to learn more directly underneath
 - Hard returns after 70 characters per line
28. Mobile Phones and HTML Email
- Significant numbers of people now read HTML email on the Blackberry, Android, iPhone, and other handsets
 - The only way to test your HTML is with a handset emulator for specific phones
 - The web browser in a handset often is used by the email software on that phone to render HTML (but not always)
 - The more modern the handset, the more likely it will display HTML emails that use HTML tables and inline CSS.
29. Other HTML Email Issues
- Accessibility/Search Engine Optimization
 - Make your email headings (e.g. H1, H2, H3) and copy accessible and use key words and phrases when your HTML email archive is stored as web pages
 - Pay attention to words and phrases your readers might use to search their email inbox and other folders: make it easy to find your content
 - Automation
 - Use a Content Management System (CMS) to generate emails from a template (e.g. WordPress) that contains your HTML email code, then use browser View > Source to get the code for each email
 - MIME types: if you code software to output an email, be careful of HTML vs text markers in your code
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31. Free HTML Email Templates
- Campaign Monitor and MailChimp offer a wide range of free templates, as do other services
 - However, some services automatically inline CSS styles defined in the head of their free email templates: don't leave these definitions in place. Inline them yourself or use a service like Premailer that will do it for you.
32. (Mostly Free) Resources
- <http://www.campaignmonitor.com> [templates/research/delivery/testing]
 - <http://www.mailchimp.com> [templates/research/delivery/testing]

- <http://www.themeforest.net/category/email-templates> [templates]
- <http://www.emailmarketingvoodoo.com/> [industry news]
- <http://premailer.dialect.ca/> [service to inline your css]
- <http://www.browsercam.com> [testing]
- <http://www.litmusapp.com> [testing]
- <http://browserlab.adobe.com> [testing]
- <http://www.email-standards.org> [research]
- <http://www.email-standards.org/clients/> [research]
- <http://www.campaignmonitor.com/css/> [research]
- <http://www.campaignmonitor.com/blog/post/2905/html5-and-video-in-email/> [video]
- <http://www.sitepoint.com/books/htmlmail1/> [book]
- http://www.mailchimp.com/resources/email_marketing_guide.phtml [guide]
- <http://www.reachcustomersonline.com/2010/01/23/09.27.00/> [my article]

33. Questions?

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