



**617-778-6028**

## **HTML Creative Design Guidelines**

An effective design should do more than look nice. It should support the message and render correctly. When a design is properly executed, it really is worth a thousand words. Tight and compelling copy will “hook” users and lead them to the proper call to action. Simple and clean HTML will help maximize deliverability of the message.

### **HTML Design Requirements**

- Use HTML software such as Dreamweaver, MS FrontPage, or Adobe GoLive to create the HTML. Do not use MS Word, MS Publisher, or other graphics/desktop publishing software. ImageReady or Fireworks can be used in some instances along with HTML software for designs if used properly.
- Do not use Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), JavaScript, Submission Forms, Layers, or Rich Media (i.e. Flash movies, animation). These elements cause deliverability issues which can affect the campaign responses, hinder our deliverability for future campaigns, and do not render correctly in many email ISPs.
- Use basic HTML tags for the coding. If your HTML software uses CSS for formatting, adjust the preferences to apply formatting using basic HTML tags only. If *absolutely necessary*, inline style sheets are an acceptable substitute for CSS, but they may still be stripped by some ISPs and email readers.
- Whenever possible, minimize the use of graphics/images in the design to avoid these potential issues:
  1. **Many recipients have images/graphics disabled** in their email account on emails from unknown senders, so they won't see any information that is in the images/graphics. If they have formatted text in the HTML, the recipient can at least read the text part of the HTML if images/graphics are disabled. If the recipient is able to read the text and discover what the message is, they will be more likely to enable the images/graphics and act on the offer.
  2. The higher the ratio of image-to-text area in an HTML, the higher the SPAM score. We recommend no more than 30% of the design area be images or graphics, and the rest should be formatted text.

3. The more images/graphics there are, the more time it takes for a recipient to download. Potential customers will be lost if they have to wait for images to download in order to read or act on the message.
  4. Any print that is part of the image/graphic can be fuzzy or blurry, making it difficult to read. This happens because graphics/images are optimized or compressed to reduce file size and maximize download speed.
- Avoid using "float" tags or pixel coordinates for positioning of objects in a design. Most ISPs will not correctly render the positioning of these objects using these tags. Use table rows and columns as an alternative for positioning of objects.
  - Do not use comments in the HTML code of your email as they can potentially flag spam triggers.
  - Provide a hyperlink to a related web site or at least an email address that the recipient can contact if there is not a web site available.
  - Keep the width of the HTML message under 650 pixels to ensure the design is not cut off in preview panes for recipients and eliminate the need for scrolling horizontally to see the whole design.
  - If doing a B2B email campaign, keep in mind that background images do not display for users of Outlook 2007. Background colors will render in Outlook 2007, so those can be used as an alternative. They can also be used together in the code so the background color will load if the background image does not.
  - Keep the message size under 50KB for consumer emails, and under 75KB for business emails to optimize download time and deliverability.

## **HTML Design Recommendations**

Focus design efforts on areas that can maximize responses and deliverability:

- Minimize graphics and images to logos, photos of products, or situational photos that support the message visually. Don't rely on graphics and images for the main contents of the message.
- Keep the length of the email short, concise, and about one page maximum in length. Newsletters may be longer, but the further details of a message should be left on a hyperlinked web page.
- Hyperlinks should be prominently displayed and used in multiple locations if the purpose is to drive customers to your web site and measure results by click-throughs.

- Place the most important info “above the fold”, meaning the top 2-4 inches of the design. Include a headline, call-to-action, and a small logo in this area to grab the attention of the reader right away. **Do not rely exclusively on images/graphics for this information** in case it is blocked and immediately discourages the recipient from acting on the offer.
- Use fonts that are universal on the Internet such as Arial, Verdana, Tahoma, or Times New Roman. Any other fonts will resort to a default font if the recipient doesn’t have it installed on their computer.
- Clearly identify what the call to action is that you want the recipient to make to act on your offer.
- Use bullet points to identify key points in the message.
- Minimize the number of fonts, sizes, and colors used in the design for easy flow and professional look.
- Keep the subject line fewer than 49 characters. Any words after 49 characters may not be seen by some recipients because they could be cut off by their email ISP.
- Use ALT tags in the HTML code for each image used in the HTML design.
- When possible, avoid using white (#FFFFFF) text. Spammers sometimes use white text on white backgrounds to prevent visibility of some text, so Spam filters may flag usage of white text.
- Use a signature graphic, to make the e-mail appear more personal.
- Use headers, especially those featuring a brand or logo.
- Add a colored background behind a small but important part of the e-mail message to distinguish it.

Finally, remember that when it comes to copy you must take into account the federal CAN-SPAM Act and spam filters. SMA has created a solution that **may** help with the deliverability of the message. Although all offers are different and we cannot guarantee the deliverability of the message, our solution decreases the likelihood a message will be filtered out as spam. Please contact your sales rep if you would like further details.

## **SPAM Avoidance Guidelines**

**When sending an email message make sure the offer is relevant to the target audience!**

## **Message Recommendations for Avoiding Spam Filters**

Industry experts estimate between 10 and 20 percent of permissioned email messages do not arrive in the inbox as intended because the receiving ISP incorrectly identified the message as spam. This presents a problem for marketers because revenue is lost and campaign results are inaccurate.

### **Message Guidelines**

You may wish to follow these guidelines when designing a message. Please remember that these are general rules and do not provide a 100% guarantee that a filter will not tag your message.

#### **SPAM TO AVOID ALTERNATIVES TO SPAM**

|                                      |                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Do not repeat words                  | Be succinct; try to avoid 'spam' words.                                                         |
| Do not use all caps                  | Keep everything in lowercase or Title Case if possible.                                         |
| Do not use !, \$, or 100% affordable | Keep punctuation to a minimum.<br>Reasonably priced, reasonable, within your means, inexpensive |
| Bargain or best prices               | Good deal, good buy                                                                             |
| click here*                          | learn how, visit here                                                                           |
| congratulations                      | Well done                                                                                       |
| debt                                 | Owe, arrears, bills, deficit, due, liability                                                    |
| financing                            | Banking, expenditure, expenses, funding                                                         |
| free! for free?, for free!           | No-cost, no-fee, complimentary, sample                                                          |
| guaranteed                           | Proven, certain, attested, affirmed, confirmed, insured                                         |
| insurance                            | Coverage, assurance, warranty, safeguard                                                        |
| investment                           | Expenditure, expense, asset, grant                                                              |
| just released                        | New-improved                                                                                    |
| loan                                 | Loan-plan, lending                                                                              |
| low interest                         | Low risk                                                                                        |
| new car                              | New automobile                                                                                  |
| opportunity                          | Prospect opening, break, chance, occasion                                                       |
| paying too much                      | Over expenditure                                                                                |
| permanent low interest               | Definite low interest, preset                                                                   |
| pre-approved                         | Pre-accepted, authorized, confirmed, credited                                                   |
| refinancing                          | Funding, outlay                                                                                 |
| special invitation                   | Proposal                                                                                        |
| unbelievable                         | Astounding, amazing, wonderful, awesome                                                         |

### **Subject Line**

When creating your subject line, **avoid** using the following words or characters:

|                         |                 |                       |                    |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| • ! or multiple !!!!    | • free upgrade  | • free gift           | • consolidate debt |
| • \$ or multiple \$\$\$ | • Free or FREE  | • free offer or offer | • Win a            |
| • adv.                  | • mortgage rate | • Urgent              | • save \$          |
| • apply now             | • New Customers | • One time            | • please read      |
| • ALL CAPS              | • Prize         | • Order Now           |                    |

### **Message Body**

When creating the text of your message, **avoid** using the following words or phrases:

|                                                                                  |                                  |                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| • ALL CAPS WORDS OR SENTENCES                                                    | • free information               | • clickhere (no space) |
| • ***** (e.g. as a separator in plain text messages)                             | • free membership                | • consolidate bill     |
| • 100% satisfaction                                                              | • free quote                     | • credit card debt     |
| • 18 years or older                                                              | • future mailing                 | • custom quote         |
| • 1-800... or 1-888...                                                           | • home financing                 | • dream vacation       |
| • a tracking number (visible, not autodetect)                                    | • interest rates                 | • earn \$              |
| • act now                                                                        | • limited time offer             | • email marketing      |
| • amazing stuff                                                                  | • mail is never sent unsolicited | • financial freedom    |
| • satisfaction guaranteed                                                        | • free consultation              | • spam                 |
| • prize                                                                          | • winner                         | • drawing              |
| • celebrity                                                                      | • sexy                           | • special offer        |
| • click below (CLICK BELOW) in multiple HTML references and in various locations |                                  |                        |
| • click here (CLICK HERE) in multiple HTML references and in various locations   |                                  |                        |

### **Spam Analysis Service**

We offer a solution that may help with the deliverability of the message. Although all offers are different and we cannot guarantee the deliverability of the message, our solution decreases the likelihood that the message will be filtered out as spam.

Our service analyzes the content of the message looking for key words and phrases. The spam analyzer gives a score that indicates likelihood that the message will be viewed as spam. Ask your sales rep for additional details.

### **Other useful Information**

#### **FROM LINE:**

The From Line consists of everything to the **left** of @ sign with no spaces between words and should **be descriptive without being misleading**. Don't use words such as "free" "sale" "actnow" or other obvious spam filter trigger words. You are allowed to use a total of **5 different From Lines maximum** for your broadcast

Everything to the **right** of the @ sign is the domain name. We have an inventory of hundreds of domain names that we use from generics such as @wigitweb.info to specialized domain names such as @stockpickersguide.com. The complete email address is encrypted and has no linkage to your website or your personnel or business email address. The email address can't be replied to. Emails are only broadcasted from our inventory of domain names.

We utilize domain names in our inventory based on what TMG feels will be effective and appropriate for your broadcast. **You are not allowed to specify domain names for you broadcast.**

**Good Example:** FMiller@XYZ.com or MediaKit@XYZ.com

**Bad Example:** FreeViagraActNow@badfromline.com or NoFeeMortgageRefi@badfromline.com

### **SUBJECT LINE:**

Once we have delivered the email the next step is to have the person receiving the email to **open it**. This is accomplished by the **Subject Line**. You can increase your open rate by dramatically with a great subject line.

The subject Line is **one of the most important parts of an email broadcast**, the most overlooked and generally given the least thought. The Subject Line is the **Call To Action** that motivates the individual to **open** the email. We have all received emails that we knew were going to be from the Nigerian General who had \$200,000,000 for us. We knew what it was going to be when we opened it, but there was something about the Subject Line that go our attention, peaked our curiosity and told us to open this one.

The recipient of an email must open it or they will not be exposed to the product or service you are advertising. A good Subject Line should be descriptive without being misleading and have a **strong call to action**. Don't use words such as "Free" "Sale" "Act Now" "Limited Time" "Special Offer" "30 % Off" "Big Savings For You" "No Charge For Shipping" "No Closing Costs" "ALL CAPS" or symbols such as ! or other obvious spam filter trigger words. You are allowed to use a total of **5 different Subject Lines maximum** for your broadcast.

**Good Example:** Fw: media kit attached

**Bad Example:** 35% off Acct Now FREE SHIPPING!

### **LANDING PAGE & LINK:**

The Landing Page is the web page where your prospect will be direct to when they click on the creative.

The Link is your full website address or the address where you want the prospect to be directed to. The HTML hyperlink code that is embedded into the creative directs the prospect to the Landing Page you want them to go to see more about you product or service.

Generally you should make the entire graphic a hyperlink rather than make one area a hot spot. By making the entire graphic a hyperlink the prospect will be directed to your landing page no matter where they click on your creative increasing your page views, traffic and exposure.

#### **SUPPRESSION FILE:**

**If you have used email marketing in the past you must provide a Suppression File.** A suppression file is the data file of those whom have opted out from your current and previous email advertising, and must be provided to TGM, LLC, if any exists, or is known to exist, by yourself or others acting on your behalf. This list should be current within 10 days of any opt-out request and should be updated on an ongoing basis.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the nation's consumer protection agency, is authorized to enforce the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 and gives consumers the right to ask emailers to stop emailing them. The law gives you 10 business days to stop sending email to the requestor's email address. You cannot help another entity send email to that address, or have another entity send email on your behalf to that address.

**We remove all opt-out requests from our database in real time**

**Suppression files, if any, should be provided to TMG, LLC in .csv file Format**

**CREATIVE DESIGN:** You are allowed up to 5 different Creative's maximum for your broadcast.

All creative's should be complete, pre tested by yourself, free of any need for alterations of any kind and ready for broadcasting when submitted to TMG, LLC. Creative's that require rework or adjustments will be charged \$50 per 15 minutes (maximum of 2 alterations) spent on alterations and corrections with a minimum charge of \$50 or starting \$250 to build your creative for you with 3 revisions allowed. We encrypt all links within the creative and redirect through our server protecting your identity and the integrity of your website. **We only accept image files in .jpg .gif and .png format.**

**Not Accepted:** We only accept .html or .txt creative's. We do not accept creative's built in MSWord or utilizing Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), containing Java Scripts or Flash. We don't accept creative's that contain nudity, violence, depiction of criminal acts or offensive material.

#### **Accepted Creative Formats:**

**.TXT Format Creative's - recommended size less than 20k**

Creative's that are **only** .txt format generally should be a maximum of 8 lines and include the landing page link. **.TXT creative's can't contain any graphics or images**. Careful attention should be paid to the content avoiding spam trap trigger words and phrases. Remember your creative is the call to action that will get your prospect to click through to your landing page and view your product or service. You should test your .txt creative for deliverability with different domains prior to submitting the final approved creative for broadcasting. We don't accept txt creative files submitted in MS Word or in any other format other than MS notepad. This file should be attached and email as a .txt file. Please name the file with your IO #.

**.HTML Format Creative's - recommended size less than 50k - Image format in .jpg .gif or .png**

Creative's that are built in .HTML format may contain graphics, text, links or any combination of these. A graphic file in itself such as a .jpg or .gif file format that contains Ad Copy is just that **Ad Copy and does not constitute a creative. We only accept image files in .jpg .gif and .png format.**

HTML creative's should be created only in an HTML Editor such as MS FrontPage or Dreamweaver. **HTML creative's built in MS Word, MS Publisher, MS Works and other document publishing software will not be accepted.** Although these programs are capable of saving a document in .HTML format they create a great deal of junk code that can dramatically decrease the deliverability of your email broadcast, block our ability to track your broadcast, or alter hyperlinks and graphic links within the creative.

**.HTML Graphic Only Creative - recommended size less than 20k - Image format .jpg .gif or .png**

An HTML creative consisting of only **graphic file (only in .jpg .gif and .png format)** (ad copy) with a **hyperlink** is very commonly creative used. This type of creative is very easy to create and very small in byte size. The image is not actually embedded in the email sent but is located on a server. You should not host the graphic image on the same server as your website or within your website domain. When the email is opened the image is called by the **href** command and the image appears. Depending on the bytes size in of the graphic file this could be instant or there could be slight delay before the image appears in the email.

**The deliverability of a graphic only creative can be as much as 200 % less than a combined .html and .txt creative or text only creative.** Because a graphics file is similar to a photo, and does not contain text, the verbiage within the image **can contain** words such as FREE, ACT NOW, SPECIAL OFFER and all the strong call to action verbiage that would normally be blocked by email and spam filters. As a guide the image size in pixels should be between 400x400 (fast loading)and 750x750 (slow Loading). **Make the entire .jpg .gif .png and image a hyperlink** to your landing page rather than one hot spot.

The most common mistake with this type of creative is that the full domain address and file name are incomplete, the hyperlink was not put in the image or the aspect ratio of the graphic is not correct. Also, the HTML code should not contain META tags or other code that would be used and associated with a web site.

**Creative code should be saved in MS Notepad and emailed.** You should test your creative for deliverability with different domains prior to submitting the final approved creative for broadcasting.

**The deliverability of a graphic only creative can be as much as 200 % less than a combined .html and .txt creative or text only creative.** Using the minimum or settings in MS Outlook, or gmail a .html Graphic only creative containing only a graphic(s) has a 200% greater chance that it will be filtered as spam. Once an email is sent to a spam box, if not automatically deleted, 3 actions are required by the recipient before any images or links will be activated or recognize any tracking status. First permission is required to activate links. A second action of allowing graphics to be displayed. And third the email must be moved from the spam box to the inbox for hyperlinks to function properly.

Here is a simple example of **good code** for a .HTML Graphic Only Creative. Notice the full domain, file and graphic name. **Notice there are no META tags** or other code associated with a webpage.

```
<html>
<body>
<p><a href="http://www.fmead.com/index.html">
</a></p>
</body>
</html>
```

This is an example of the same HTML Graphic Only Creative code shown with **bad code**. Notice the full domain, file and graphic name within the links are not given. **Notice META tags** or the other code associated with a webpage that should not be included. All text content within the META tags will be read by email and spam filtering software and would result in this creative being flagged as bulk mail.

```
<html>
<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.01 Transitional//EN">
<head>
<title>Bulk email marketing lists and online advertising providing bulk postal and bulk email lists
data base appending hygiene</title>
<meta name="keywords" content="bulk email marketing,email marketing,political lists,email
lists,bulk email,political marketing,bulk,marketing lists,bulk email lists,email campaign,email
marketing lists,email,mailing lists,postal lists,data hygiene,appending,co registration,banner
ads,lead lists, NCOA,DNC,marketing plans">
<meta name="description" content="Bulk Email Marketing lists for advertising permission based
bulk Email Marketing lists lead generation conversion rates. Data base appending hygiene of
Postal list bulk email marketing lists targeted bulk email lists data world wide banner ads co
registration data base appending hygiene.">
<META NAME="robots" CONTENT="FOLLOW,INDEX">
<META NAME="distribution" CONTENT="Global">
<META NAME="rating" CONTENT="GENERAL">
<META NAME="classification" CONTENT="Public">
<META NAME="revisit-after" CONTENT="5 days">
<META HTTP-EQUIV="Expires" CONTENT="never">
<META http-equiv="Content-Language" CONTENT="en-us">
<META NAME="Author" CONTENT="Frank Stone Advertising ">
<META NAME="copyright" CONTENT="All original content, meta tags and graphics is copyright
protected by The Miller Group, LLC. Any unauthorized use is subject to payment of not less than
$10,000 per use.">
<META http-equiv="Content-Type" CONTENT="text/html; charset=windows-1252">
</head>
```

```
<body>  
<p><a href="/index.html">  
</a></p>  
</body>  
</html>
```

The Miller Group, LLC 617 778-6028