Personalization and Interactive Emails:

NEXT-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT FOR ENTERPRISE EMAIL MARKETERS

20 YEARS RPE **ORIGIN**

Email marketing continues to evolve, while competition for subscriber attention increases. In the ongoing quest to get subscribers to open, engage, and convert from emails, personalization and interactive emails play a key role for enterprise email marketers. Each has proven benefits on its own, but when used together, they can deliver a stronger connection with subscribers and a better return on investment.

The basics of personalization

Personalization has been part of the email marketer's toolbox for many years now. In the early 2000s, personalization meant simply inserting someone's name or another custom value into the email. Since that time, personalization has grown to include real-time data, predictive modeling, and AI-driven recommendations. **Today's personalization options include:**

Merge tags
for a wide range of data points.

Segmentation
based on preferences, demographics, or past behavior.

Dynamic content
for both text and graphics.

Real-time data,
such as weather or event-based information.

Product recommendations
based on purchase history or browse data.

Loyalty program
updates tied to the person's tier or status.

And much more as ESP capabilities
continue to expand.

Ultimately, personalization is about connecting to the customer and providing relevant offers or information. Subscribers get bombarded with emails every day, and a strategic approach to personalization can help cut through the noise to capture attention.

Thinking broader instead of narrower

One mistake that email marketers sometimes make with personalization is treating it solely as a way to narrow the audience. From a segmentation perspective, narrowing makes sense, because you're using data to target a smaller, more specific group. But personalization can also work in the opposite direction by expanding on the data you have to create richer, more engaging campaigns.

For example, if you know a subscriber purchased hiking boots, clicked on a camping gear email, and lives in Colorado, you can extrapolate a potential interest in national parks, outdoor photography, or travel guides. This is an example of predictive personalization, which uses multiple data points to uncover new areas of interest and proactively show that content to relevant subscribers.

Pros and cons of personalization

There are both pros and cons of personalization in enterprise email marketing, and marketers must find the right balance for their brand and their audience.

The most notable pros are higher engagement, stronger loyalty, and increased conversions. Personalized subject lines and content consistently lead to higher open and click-through rates, while relevance builds trust over time. Emails with personalized product recommendations often outperform generic promotions, which results inhigher conversions.

On the cons side, even companies with strong data quality standards will run into bad or incomplete data sometimes, which can lead to embarrassing and sometimes costly errors.
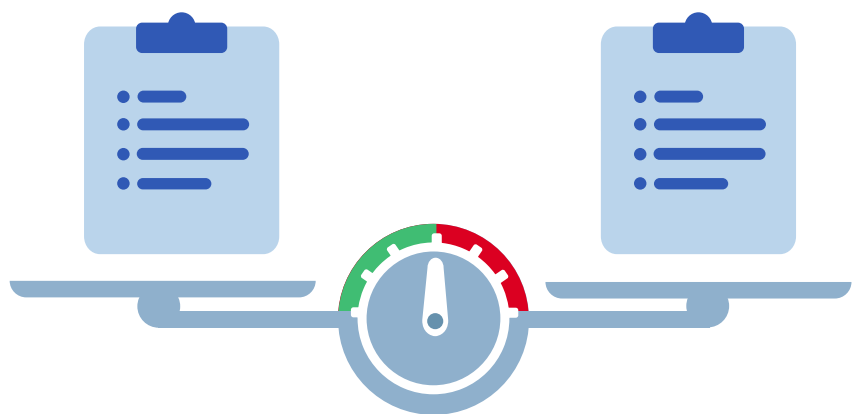
There are also privacy and compliance risks when it comes to collecting and using personal data, and it's critical that companies stay in compliance with GDPR, CCPA, and any other regulations for their industry or country. And finally, personalization can cross the line from helpful and relevant into creepy if brands aren't careful with how they use personal data.

With the right strategy in place, the pros of personalization outweigh the cons, but it's important to stay vigilant about data quality, compliance, and ensuring emails don't come across as intrusive.

Using interactive emails to engage your audience

An interactive email is one that, as the name implies, invites the user to engage directly with the email content. **That could mean:**

- Polls and quizzes
- Browsable image carousels or product galleries
- Interactive countdown timers
- Short forms to gather quick feedback
- Content arranged in tabs

Unlike standard emails where a click takes the user to a landing page, interactive emails keep the user engaging within the email itself. It's a great way to capture attention and engage your subscribers!

Pros and cons of interactive emails

The pros of interactive emails include helping your brand stand out in the inbox, driving higher engagement, and gathering first-party data. The cons include the complexity of coding interactive emails, limited email client support, and the extra testing required.

Interactive emails make a statement about the professionalism of your brand. You're not just sending another email — you're delivering a unique and engaging experience for your audience, and that means higher opens, clicks, and conversions. Interactive elements can also let subscribers tailor their email experience and help gather preferences. For example, an interactive email designed using tabs for three different content areas lets the reader click on the most relevant tab rather than scrolling down to read what matters most. Using a tab-based interactive design, you know what tabs the subscriber clicked for more information within the email rather than relying on a "read more" link that takes them away from the email.

Back on the con side, it takes more time, effort, and creativity to craft a well-executed interactive email. You need the right creative brains to make it happen and must be willing to invest the time to do it right. The interactive email experience is also highly dependent on the user's email client. Apple Mail allows the highest level of interactivity within email, while Yahoo, Gmail, and Samsung Mail support varying levels. As with many things in email coding and design, Outlook is one of the least supportive for interactive email. On average, only about **30% of your list** will see the interactive components of your email, which means having the right fallbacks in place and thoroughly testing them is critical.

Getting started with interactive emails

One of the most important things to remember when getting started with interactive emails is that it's an investment over time. It's a good place to start small and build from there, with full awareness that you're not likely to see immediate results. In fact, your short-term results may look worse until most of your audience sees your interactive emails and started engaging with them.

Adding a single interactive element to an existing email is a good place to start. Set up an A/B test to measure its performance against the non-interactive version, then repeat a similar test in several other emails. Gradually add other interactive elements, such as an interactive image carousel or tabbed content. Be sure to track specific clicks on tabbed content and add that data to the user's profile for future use with personalization.

There are several options for adding interactive elements to emails, including CSS-based interactive design, creative use of GIFs, and other coding options. Be sure to test thoroughly and have the right fallbacks in place for users whose email providers don't support interactive email.

Combining personalization and interactive emails

Using personalization or interactive emails separately can boost engagement rates and conversions, but combining the two can lead to even better results. Here are a few examples for how you can combine personalization with interactivity:

- A travel brand sends a short quiz asking the recipient to choose their perfect fall getaway, then the email shows recommended locations based on their response to the quiz.

- A clothing retailer displays an interactive product carousel where the user clicks through recommendations from recently browsed categories.

- A streaming service sends a "choose your next series" email with tabs for different genres that are pre-populated based on past viewing habits.

The key to effectively combining personalization and interactive emails is to be intentional with it. Just because you can doesn't mean you should. Each element in an interactive email should serve a clear purpose within the customer journey.

# Measuring the impact of personalization and interactive emails

As with other enterprise email metrics, measuring the results of personalization and interactive emails requires tracking both engagement data and business data. Be sure you're tracking these metrics to measure the impact of personalization and interactive emails:

- Open rates and click-through rates
- Interaction rates (how many subscribers answered a poll, clicked a tab, etc)
- Conversion rates
- Average order value
- Subscriber lifetime value
- Preference updates
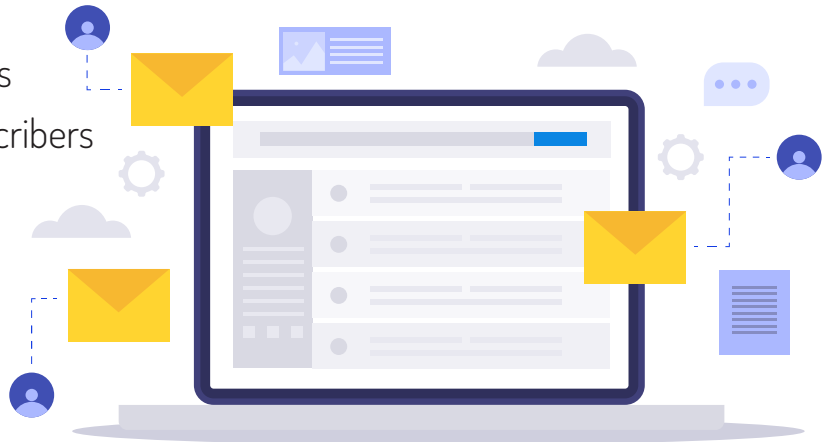
Adding interactive email to your email marketing strategy is a long game, not a short one, so be sure to track your metrics over time to identify trends and measure the impact on both email engagement and conversions.

Final thoughts

Personalization and interactive emails give marketers the tools to create relevant, engaging email experiences. Success comes from having clear goals, clean data, and a strategy that focuses on enhancing the customer journey. When done well, personalization and interactivity help emails stand out, drive measurable improvements in engagement and conversions, and strengthen the relationship between your brand and your audience.

About RPE Origin

We are the industry's only vendor-agnostic, email-centric agency serving enterprise companies throughout their digital journey. We aim to be an indispensable partner for enterprise and agency clients who rely on email for success. Whether you need help choosing a new ESP, enhancing automated B2C or B2B customer journeys, or connecting data points across your tech stack, we help you move from simple to sophisticated to drive more revenue through email marketing.

Our team lives email every day, and that includes both email marketing and maximizing the connective tissue across all digital channels. With our customized approach and flexible services, we can do everything from one piece of the puzzle to the entire picture.

Need help with creating more engaging emails with personalization and interactive elements?

Contact our team to get the conversation started.