



Welcome and Overview

*"What is the best day to send emails?
...we've developed this report to help answer these and other questions on delivery-related issues..."*

Welcome to the first EmailLabs Quarterly Delivery Trends report! Following the end of each calendar quarter, EmailLabs will issue this report covering key email marketing delivery statistics. The report is based on the aggregate activities of hundreds of our clients and their subscribers and customers, who number in the tens of millions. EmailLabs' clients may only distribute emails to recipients that have opted-in to receive email messages or have existing customer relationships.

EmailLabs is frequently asked questions such as "What is the best day to send emails?"; "What is the best time of day to send messages?"; and "What is an acceptable or average bounce rate?" As a result, we've developed this report to help answer these and other questions on delivery-related issues – and to provide insight and tips for active email marketers. We hope these quarterly reports "deliver" value to you and your marketing efforts – and contribute to helping you take your email marketing program to the next level.

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Table of Contents

Welcome and Overview	1
Send Day	1
Send Time	2
Open Day	2
Open Time	3
Click-Through Day	4
Click Time	4
Unsubscribe Rates	5
Bounce Rates	6
Report Methodology and Definitions	6
About EmailLabs	7

Delivery Trends Report Q3 2003



Send Day: If Its Tuesday, Press the Send Button

For the second consecutive quarter, Tuesday (25.4%) is the most popular day of the week to send email messages, followed by Wednesday at 23.3% and Thursday at 18.3%. Bringing up the rear is Saturday at 0.9% and Sunday at 1.4%.

"More than two-thirds of all messages are sent Tuesday through Thursday"

Send Day	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Q3	1.4%	15.1%	25.4%	23.3%	18.3%	15.6%	0.9%
Q2	1.5%	14.1%	26.7%	23.7%	22.4%	10.6%	1.0%
Q1	1.8%	14.1%	22.4%	23.2%	22.8%	15.2%	0.5%

While there are some minor differences among the three quarters, the general trends remain the same:

- More than two-thirds of all messages are sent Tuesday through Thursday
- Less than 3% of all messages are sent on the weekend
- Monday and Friday consistently comprise between 25%-30% of emails sent

Why Tuesday and Wednesday? For years the general rule in email has been to not email on Monday (first day back in the office) or Friday (end of week deadlines, leaving early, etc.). Also, unless you are targeting an appropriate consumer audience, "forget the weekends" has been a commonly held belief. From a practical perspective, marketing teams often complete the email creative and production process on Friday or Monday, leading to a Tuesday or Wednesday distribution.

Implications: The most obvious implication is that during the middle of the week your email messages are battling with a greater amount of legitimate email than on other days. Depending upon your content, relationship you have with your recipients, who they are, frequency of emails and other factors – days other than the middle of the week may in fact generate better results for you.

For more on this topic, read our article: What is the Best Time to Send an Email Promotion or Newsletter? - http://www.emaillabs.com/article_time_to_send.html

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Send Times: Early Email Gets the Opens?

In Q3, 17.8% of all messages were sent in the 9 a.m. (PST) hour, followed by 12.6% in the 10 a.m. hour. For the third straight quarter, roughly half of all messages were sent between 8 a.m. and noon; and more than three fourths between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m.

"For the third straight quarter, roughly half of all messages were sent between 8 a.m. and noon."

Send Times

Time Sent	9 a.m.	10 a.m.	8 a.m. - Noon	7 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Q3	17.8%	12.6%	51.0%	76.4%
Q2	14.2%	11.1%	47.1%	76.9%
Q1	19.1%	11.3%	55.2%	81.7%

Implications: No surprises here, for U.S.-based marketers, sending emails during the morning (West Coast)/midday (East Coast) is logical. The theory is to get your emails to recipients either in the morning after they've deleted the overnight deluge of spam, or during/after lunch. For marketers the key questions are really: 1) When will most of your recipients open and take action on your emails? and 2) How long will it take to get your messages delivered?



Let's Play Ball - Wednesday is "Opening Day"

In the first three quarters of 2003, Wednesday was the most popular day for opening emails, followed by Tuesday. In Q3, 62.1% of emails were opened between Tuesday and Thursday, while only 9.1% were opened on weekends.

Wednesday's open popularity is clearly driven by the "hangover effect" and results from nearly 48.7% of messages being sent on Tuesday and Wednesday. On Wednesdays recipients will open emails sent that day as well as the emails from Tuesday, the day they most likely received the highest number in their inbox. It is interesting to note that a significantly higher **percentage** of emails are opened on the weekends, than are sent by email marketers on Saturday and Sunday.

Open Days

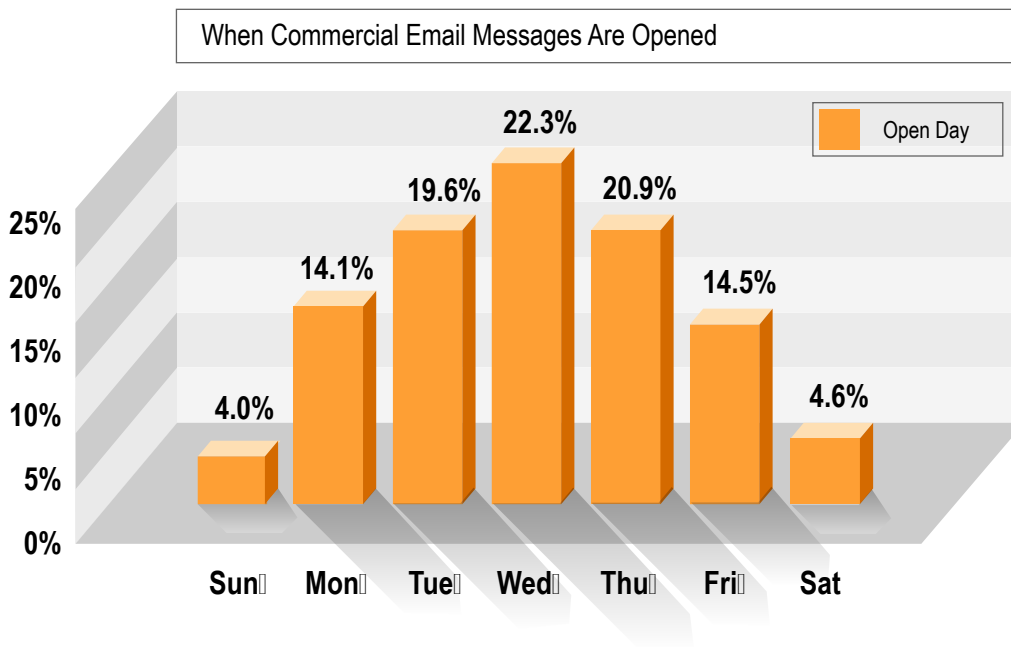
	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Q3	4.1%	15.1%	19.6%	22.8%	19.7%	13.7%	5.0%
Q2	3.9%	13.3%	20.7%	22.0%	21.5%	14.3%	4.3%
Q1	4.0%	13.8%	18.6%	22.2%	21.5%	15.4%	4.5%

Implications: When determining when to send your emails, ensure that you understand the "open delay" factor. Secondly, if your message content and frequency allows it, don't be afraid to test distributing your emails on days other than Tuesday through Thursday.

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"...don't be afraid to test distributing your emails on days other than Tuesday through Thursday."



Open Times: Its 11 a.m. - Time for Email and Another Cup of Joe

For the first three quarters of 2003, 11 a.m. (PST) was the highest time period for recipients to open their email messages. For the period of 8 a.m. through 4 p.m., more than 50% of messages were opened by recipients and roughly 75% were opened during the period of 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

"...roughly 75% were opened during the period of 6 a.m. to 6 p.m."

Open Times			
Time Sent	11 a.m.	8 a.m - 4 p.m.	6 a.m - 6 p.m
Q3	6.8%	53.7%	74.5%
Q2	6.6%	52.5%	73.4%
Q1	7.3%	58.8%	77.7%

With 25%-30% of email messages sent between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m., it is not surprising that the 11 a.m. time slot is the highest open period. From a recipient perspective, U.S. West Coast recipients are checking emails before lunch, while East Coasters are back from lunch and catching up.

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Implications: The middle of the business day is clearly a strong period of the day for B2B email recipients to take action. For consumer recipients, evening and early morning times should not be ignored. As always, test some different combinations of days and times – and go with what generates the best end desired result.



Nearly One-Fourth of Click-Throughs Occur on Wednesday

Not surprisingly, Tuesday through Thursday are the most popular days for email recipients to click on a link(s) in the commercial emails they receive. Wednesday was the most popular “click-through day” in all three quarters in 2003, averaging nearly one-fourth of all click-through action. Surprisingly, recipients increased their click-through activity on Mondays during the course of the year to nearly 16% in Q3. This appears to be a direct result of our clients sending more of their email messages on Mondays and recipients correspondingly opening a higher percentage on the same day. Weekends remained steady, comprising roughly 9% of click-through action, but the increase on Mondays resulted in a decline in activity on both Thursdays and Fridays.

"nearly three fourths are clicked on during the 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. period"

Click-Through Days

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Q3	3.9%	15.9%	20.8%	24.1%	17.4%	12.9%	5.0%
Q2	3.8%	13.5%	20.2%	23.9%	20.2%	13.9%	4.5%
Q1	4.2%	11.9%	19.6%	24.6%	19.6%	14.9%	5.2%

Implications: The most significant implication of the above trend is that Monday may not be such a bad day after all for email performance. While much of this shift appears to be driven by the “supply side,” the numbers strongly suggest that email marketers should not ignore sending emails on Mondays – as recipients will indeed open and take action on your messages.



Click-Through Time: Morning, Noon and Night

While 11 a.m. PST is generally the top hour when recipients click on their emails, they are clearly active throughout almost the entire day. Nearly one-third of emails are clicked on during the 8 a.m. to noon (PST) time period, while nearly three fourths are clicked on during the 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. period. The first three quarters of 2003 saw no significant variance across click-through time periods. Additionally, during the heart of the day, click action by recipients is very constant. As an example, in Q3 between the hours of 6 a.m. and 4 p.m. PST, the percentage of click-through actions by hour ranged from 5.3% to 6.2%. At 1.3%, 2 a.m. PST was the hour of the day when the fewest people clicked on emails.

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Email Marketing Automation Solutions

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"The decline in overall unsubscribe rates is not surprising, the likely results of an increasing mistrust of the unsubscribe process by recipients"

Click-Through Time

	11 a.m.	8 a.m. - noon	6 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Q3	6.2%	30.0%	73.7%
Q2	6.0%	29.5%	72.3%
Q1	6.5%	31.5%	74.0%

Implications: Clearly, no matter what time of day your emails are sent, someone, somewhere will open and take action on them. But for the most part, particularly if your audience is business rather than consumer focused, you have a very large window of opportunity during normal business hours for people to take action on your emails. The real key, therefore, is to have a deep understanding of who comprises (for example, B2C vs B2B) your mailing list and in what time zones they reside.

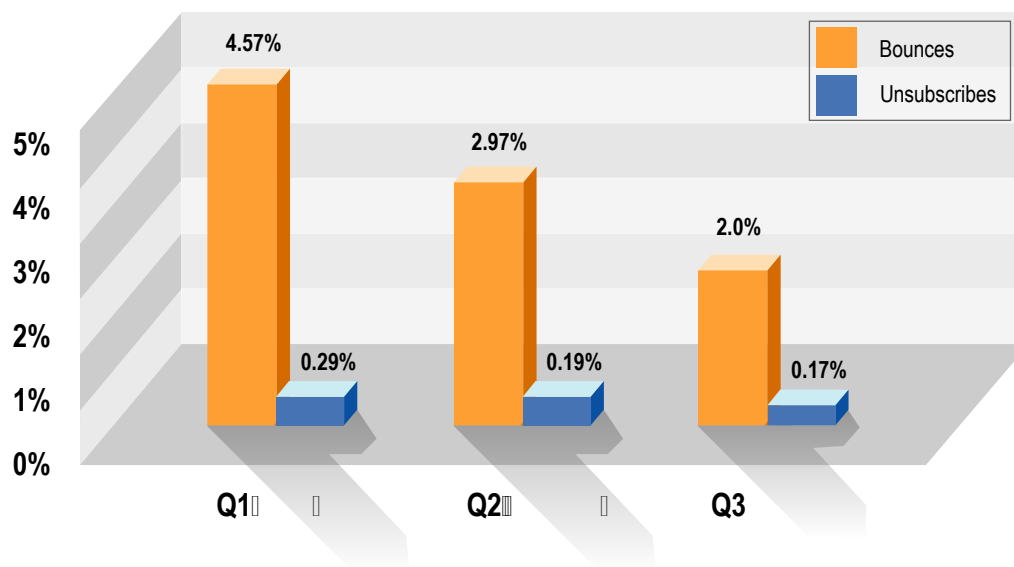


Unsubscribe Rate Declines - The Trust is Gone

The average unsubscribe rate (HTML and text messages) in Q3 was 0.17%, a decline from .19% in Q2 and .29% in Q1 2003. Text messages were unsubscribed at a slightly higher rate than HTML in Q3 and Q2 at 0.22%, though nearly even with HTML messages in Q1 at .28%.

The decline in overall unsubscribe rates is not surprising, the likely result of an increasing mistrust of the unsubscribe process by recipients. Secondly, with the explosion of spam emails, consumers have become accustomed to deleting dozens, if not hundreds, of emails per day. This often includes deleting legitimate emails they've opted in to rather than using the more time consuming unsubscribe process.

Bounce and Unsubscribe Rates



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Implications: Email marketers should always watch their unsubscribe rate closely, but if it is in fact declining for your company, don't assume that you have a higher retention rate. Make sure your unsubscribe process is simple and functioning, and instills a sense of trust. Secondly, consider weeding out in-active subscribers from your list. For example, consider asking subscribers that haven't taken any action over a specific time period to re opt-in.



Overall Bounce Rates Show Steady Decline

Bounced messages (includes only "hard" bounces) in Q3 averaged 2.0% each month, down from 2.97% in Q2 and 4.57% in Q1. The overall cause of the decline in bounce rates during the last three quarters is not entirely clear, however, some possible theories include:

- **Changes in ISP Processes** – In 2003 many ISPs increased their usage of filters, rather than outright blocking, and increased user controls with advanced filtering/blacklist and whitelist options. This could mean ISPs are scaling back the wider scale spam blocking tools they are using and favoring the user – controlled methods more.
- **Better List Hygiene** – Another factor could be the increasing awareness among email marketers of the importance of list hygiene. With the growing concern about ISP and corporate filters, marketers are placing greater emphasis on keeping their lists clean and up to date – to minimize bounces. Bounces are important to overall delivery rates because many ISPs will block the balance of a campaign distribution if they detect a higher than normal bounce rate in the initial volume of emails delivered.

Implications: Bounce rates will likely fluctuate over the coming year, as ISPs and corporations continue to evolve how they process bounces and deploy content-based filters. For permission email marketers, particularly those who send high volume campaigns, the rules of the game have become clear – conduct thorough list hygiene and check your messages for potential code or content that might trigger a spam filter. Do this and you should maintain a low bounce rate and ensure optimum delivery.



Report Methodology and Definitions

The data collected for this report is based upon the aggregate activities of our clients and the recipients of their email messages. EmailLabs' client accounts numbered 525 in Q3 2003, and represented a broad range of industries including publishing, financial services, technology, retail, travel, entertainment, services and more.

Data for each metric were calculated across all clients for each month, then averaged for each calendar quarter and compared across quarters. Except where noted, the statistics are based on a combination of both HTML and text messages. All times shown are Pacific Standard Time.

"the rules of the game have become clear - conduct thorough list hygiene and check your messages for potential code or content that might trigger a spam filter."

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"EmailLabs' client accounts numbered 525 in Q3 2003, and represented a broad range of industries including publishing, financial services, technology, retail, travel, entertainment, services and more."

Definitions of metrics and terms are as follows:

- Send Day – Day of the week emails were sent via our system.
- Send Time – Hour time period in which emails were actually sent.
- Opens – Emails are considered “opened” when an email is actually opened or viewed in a preview pane that displays images. Opens are tracked via a clear one – pixel image included in each HTML message. Open statistics do not include text messages.
- Open Day – Day of the week emails were opened by recipients.
- Open Time – Hour time period in which recipients opened emails.
- Click-Throughs – Click-throughs are calculated based upon recipients clicking on a hyperlink in HTML messages and text messages with links that are “clickable” via an HTML compatible email client or Web-based email account.
- Click-Through Day – Day of the week recipients clicked on a hyperlink within emails.
- Click-Through Time – Hour time period in which recipients clicked on emails.
- Bounce Rate – Emails that bounced back as a percentage of emails sent. Bounces only include “hard” bounces. Hard bounces include emails sent to an invalid address.
- Unsubscribe Rate – Percentage of recipients that unsubscribed from messages over the course of a month.



About EmailLabs

EmailLabs is a leading provider of advanced email technology solutions to agencies, publishers and marketing, sales and customer service departments of middle-market and Global 2000 companies. The EmailLabs email-marketing platform is provided as an ASP (Web-based) service, and is easily customized and integrated with a company's Web site, sales force automation and CRM technologies. The company provides email-marketing solutions to more than 300 companies, including Nokia, Agilent, AON, Honeywell, Jupitermedia, PalmSource and Silicon Valley Bank. Headquartered in Redwood City, Calif., EmailLabs is a service of Uptilt, Inc. Uptilt is privately held and profitable. For more information, visit www.EmailLabs.com.

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