Smart Email Marketers Don't Guess —
They A/B Split Test

You worked hard creating great products, at least as hard growing a viable business to support them — and perhaps even harder building the interest and trust of the subscribers who now welcome your marketing emails. Why would you ever risk all of that — your brand, your list, your revenue — sending out campaigns you didn't first prove would resonate? Why leave such key components of your business to chance? With the magic of **A/B Split Testing** (it's science, actually, but it sure works like magic), you don't have to.

campaignerExperiments

In 2007 an unknown twenty-something author with no budget conducted a simple but ingenious experiment to determine the best title for his forthcoming book. He'd narrowed his short-list to half a dozen possible titles, and he received plenty of opinions about which would be the best. But the author didn't want opinions. He wasn't willing to guess. He demanded evidence.

So he crafted a series of text ads for Google AdWords, based on various keywords related to his book's subject matter. Then he wrote several headlines for each ad using his possible titles (Millionaire Chameleon and Broadband and White Sand were among the short-list). The author wanted to see if he could determine the most appealing title based on which ad headline earned the most clicks. After a week of testing on Google, he had a clear winner: The 4-Hour Workweek became a New York Times bestseller, sold more than a million copies and spawned several follow-up books for author Tim Ferris.

What is A/B split testing?

What Ferris accomplished was a successful A/B split test, an invaluable strategy every email marketer should use. In A/B split testing, you isolate a specific element of a campaign — subject line, offer details, imagery, call-to-action, send time — and test variations on a representative sample of recipients, to learn which options pull the most responses before sending to the full list.

As an email marketer, if you're using the right email marketing software, every campaign you send can be tracked and analyzed, every element tested against variations to determine the most powerful — meaning with the right tools you can ensure every marketing message you send has already proven itself a "winner" with your audience.

Just a few of the elements of your email campaigns that you can easily A/B split test:

- Subject line
- From line
- Testimonials
- Call-to-action

- Offer details
- Fonts
- Colors
- Time of send

- Day of send
- Length of forms
- Word count
- Imagery

If you could know in advance which of each would pull the most responses, wouldn't you want to? With today's sophisticated email marketing applications, equipped with intelligent A/B split testing, you can.

How much of your marketing is wasted?

Retail tycoon John Wannamaker is credited with the famous line, "I know half of my advertising doesn't work. The problem is, I don't know which half." In the nineteenth century when Wannamaker was building his empire, and advertising was largely limited to print ads, opportunities for rapidly testing and refining ad campaigns were limited. Although he was considered a marketing genius — Wannamaker invented the money-back guarantee — he might have been right in assuming he wasted half of his advertising dollars. The tools and best practices for rapid testing simply didn't exist yet.

You, by contrast, have access today to the most sophisticated data analytics tools ever devised for email marketers — all for just a few dollars per month. With the right email marketing application and built-in split testing platform, you can test, analyze and refine any element of any campaign in real-time. You can even let your email marketing software run your A/B tests for you, based on parameters and confidence thresholds you set, and then automatically send the "winning" campaign out to your full email list.

That's right: For just a few dollars per month, you can employ a sophisticated email marketing program with A/B split-testing functionality — with better analytics and testing capabilities than were ever available to yesterday's smartest marketers.

> *Marketing Agency ResponseCapture A/B tested a standard lead-gen form (with 10 fields) — against a one-field form asking only for an email address.*
>
> **Result? A 258% conversion!**

How important is A/B split testing?

Guess which of the following buttons receives more clicks.

Get Started Now!	Get Started Now!

That's the test software developer Hubspot ran on its company Performable's website. Their assumption: the green button would win. After all, green connotes "go" and "yes" (and red means "stop"). Plus, green was part of Performable's logo and color scheme.

They were wrong. Out of the thousands of visitors they tracked, Hubspot discovered **the red button outperformed the green by 21%!** And this was a true A/B split test — meaning the pages were otherwise identical, so the experimenters were able to attribute the difference entirely to the buttons' colors. Another key insight from this experiment, important for you as an email marketer: Hubspot realized this 21% increase on the page led to a corresponding 21% increase in all downstream metrics (clicks on follow-on pages, signups, orders). In other words, they increased responses not only on this button but on all additional pages their visitors viewed. And they did this without having to increase traffic to their site — simply by optimizing a single element in one page based on an effective A/B split test.

What A/B split testing can uncover

Here are a few additional real-world case studies of A/B split testing helping marketers significantly improve their campaigns' results with just minor adjustments.

- When 37Signals split-tested two headlines, it found that "30-Day Free Trial on All Accounts" pulled in 30% more signups than "Start a Highrise Account."

- Software maker Elastic Path trimmed its two-page online checkout process to a single page — and found its new format outperforming the old by 22%.

- Marketing firm ResponseCapture tested its client's 10-field lead-gen form against a single field asking only for an email address — **and boosted signups 258%!**

So, do you know — really know — that the next email campaign you're planning to send has a subject line that's as powerful as it could be? How about the details of the offer? The placement of the product image? The wording of the call-to-action? The day of the week you're planning to send it? The time of day? The layout on a mobile device? This list can go on, of course — use your imagination.

If you're not sure every element of your next email is as strong as it could be, as sure as Tim Ferris was only after he conducted a weeklong Google AdWords campaign of his book title options, then perhaps before sending, you should conduct some A/B split tests. Even better — perhaps you should perform some **multivariate tests.**

Multivariate testing: A/B test from A to Z!

A/B split testing evaluates a single element against a competitor (for example, two identical emails with only varying calls to action) or a single "package" of variations (two emails with several different elements, but testing only which of the two wins overall — not whether any specific element outperforms another). Multivariate testing, however, lets you simultaneously test multiple variations within competing emails.

To return to the Tim Ferris book-title experiment, it's worth noting that Ferris simultaneously tested subtitles for the book as well, slipping different potential subtitles into the text of his Google ads. In other words, he was conducting not only an A/B split test on titles but also a multivariate test on subtitles. (The winner, by the way, which became the subtitle of The 4-Hour Workweek, was "Escape the 9—5, Live Anywhere, and Join the New Rich.")

What to look for in an A/B split-testing platform

Assuming you're sold on the concept of incorporating A/B split testing and multivariate testing into your email marketing arsenal, what should you expect from your testing platform? Here's a list to get you started:

Real-time reporting
From the moment your test emails go out, your recipients are potentially interacting with them, providing the real-world data you need to know for sure which variation is the winner. Your A/B split-testing platform should let you watch in real-time as these variations go head-to-head, so you can quickly identify a winner and incorporate those learnings into your campaigns.

Fail-safe sending
Your testing platform should protect you from ever sending multiple variations to the same recipient — your subscribers are far too valuable for such a mistake. If the split-testing tool you're investigating doesn't offer this feature for worry-free experimenting, look for another.

Automatic sending to the winner
Your testing tool should also have the ability to let you set your testing parameters, specify a duration, minimum confidence threshold to identify a winner — and then automatically send that winning version to your full list.

Single-click experiment reuse
When you've successfully completed an A/B test on a given variation — say, a test of two subject lines — your testing application should allow you to store the parameters you established so you can quickly reuse that experiment template with a future test of two subject lines.

How smart testing even surprised Google

Funny story. In its early days, Google conducted user tests of its homepage, sitting a user in front of a computer, with a Google researcher beside them. The researcher would bring up google.com and then observe how the user interacted with the page.

What one researcher after another found was that users just sat motionless, staring at Google's homepage — five seconds, ten seconds, thirty seconds — not doing a thing.

When the researchers asked why they weren't typing or clicking anything, users explained (can you guess?) that they were waiting for the page to finish loading. The page was actually too bare! Clearly, Google knows its audience — the company's decade-plus market domination and zillion-dollar market capitalization are proof of that. Yet even Google was surprised by how its users reacted to an early version of its famous homepage.

Their solution: Google added copyright information to the bottom of the page, specifically to show visitors the page had indeed fully loaded.

This wasn't a true A/B split test. Google wasn't experimenting with two variations of its homepage to identify the better performer. But the anecdote is valuable in demonstrating an important point for any marketer, best summarized by a quote from author and screenwriter William Goldman: "Nobody knows anything."

Yes, Google's homepage was ingenious. In an early Internet field populated by cluttered, confusing web pages, Google offered elegance and simplicity on its homepage. But they, like Tim Ferris, didn't simply rely on their gut. They tested it — and they discovered that even the terrific google.com was still missing a key element.

Start A/B split-testing today

Until you've tested your campaign in a real-world environment with a sample of your own audience, you can't know for sure it will work. With sophisticated A/B split testing tools, like the full-featured testing platform built into Campaigner® Email Marketing, you can make sure you send out only email campaigns that have already proven they will perform for you.

When the stakes are low — paper or plastic, cheese or pepperoni — go ahead and go with your gut. But when the stakes are high, as in the success or failure of your email marketing, why leave anything to chance? Become a sophisticated A/B tester!

COMPANY OVERVIEW

Campaigner™ is part of publicly traded j2 Global, Inc. (NASDAQ: JCOM) — the world's leading provider of cloud-based, business-critical communications and storage services.

Founded in 1995, j2 Global provides outsourced, value-added messaging and communications services to individuals and businesses around the world. The company offers fax, voicemail and document management solutions, Web-initiated conference calling and unified-messaging and communications services.

j2's Global network spans more than 49 countries on six continents. Serving more than 12 million subscribers worldwide, j2 has offices in nine cities around the world, accepts payment in twelve currencies, and provides customer support in more than seven languages.

To learn more about Campaigner and our big-data solution, Campaigner Elements™, please visit us at www.campaigner.com, or contact us at 866-358-6388.

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