

# Before You Hit Send

**BEST PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE EMAIL  
PERFORMANCE**

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Monica Malmgren, Firefly Partners

bbcon<sup>®</sup> 2019



@fireflypartners

# HELLO!

## I'm Monica Malmgren

DIGITAL STRATEGIST AT FIREFLY PARTNERS

I am driven by the opportunity to work with numerous nonprofits and to support them as they tackle issues I am passionate about. I work with our clients to survey their current digital marketing plans and get them where they'd like to be.

# Firefly Partners

Firefly Partners is a women-owned digital marketing agency. We put our technology expertise to work for nonprofits who are tackling today's biggest challenges. We are Blackbaud Luminate Online® and Blackbaud TeamRaiser® experts committed to creating solutions that help you communicate your message to the right people when it matters most.



# Today's Session Will Cover

## Build



Options to guide you to the right look, feel, and content for your organization's emails.

## Testing



Solving rendering issues plus what to test, who to test, and how to test.

## Measurement



Key metrics from previous campaigns that you should be tracking to evaluate your upcoming emails.



BUT FIRST: Email Is Not  
Going the Way of the  
Dinosaur

# Blackbaud Benchmarks 2018

## List Growth



Email lists grew at 7.1%, roughly the same rate as the number of emails sent (7.6%).

## Opens + Clicks



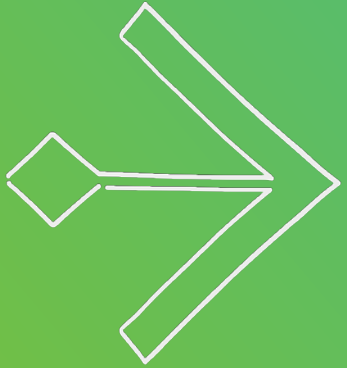
Fundraising email open rates declined 7.06%, while click rates increased by 4.35% and conversion rates remained steady. While fewer people open fundraising emails, those who do are more inclined to engage.

## Donations



Nonprofits inspired 18.4% of their email lists to donate. Sustainer revenue grew by 18.4%, compared to 7.4% growth for non-sustainer gifts.

Stay tuned for the 2019 Report



PUTTING YOUR EMAIL TOGETHER



The image shows two tall, fluted stone columns standing side-by-side. Between the columns, a man and a woman are standing, their silhouettes visible against the sky. The right side of the image is partially obscured by a blue gradient overlay.

# Layout

ONE COLUMN OR TWO COLUMN



## ONE COLUMN

- Easier to confidently design for more email clients and device sizes
- One item at a time
- Requires more scrolling

## TWO COLUMN

- Room for more content at the top
- Rendering issues
- Stacking on mobile

Please take a minute to let us know if you're still as committed as the day you joined.

Yes, I'm in. ▶

You can count on me to donate marrow if needed.

Every time you renew your promise, you tell transplant doctors that you're available for patients in need.

You can also take this time to [update your contact information](#), if needed.

Want to help patients while you wait for the call? [Learn how.](#)

Sorry, no. ▶

Please remove me from future patient searches.

Please take a minute to let us know if you're still as committed as the day you joined.

Yes, I'm in. ▶

You can count on me to donate marrow if needed.

Every time you renew your promise, you tell transplant

Sorry, no. ▶

Please remove me from future patient searches.

If you are no longer willing or able to donate marrow, please

ONE-COLUMN VS. TWO-COLUMN



# Subject Lines

CLEAR AND DIRECT VS. CLICKBAIT

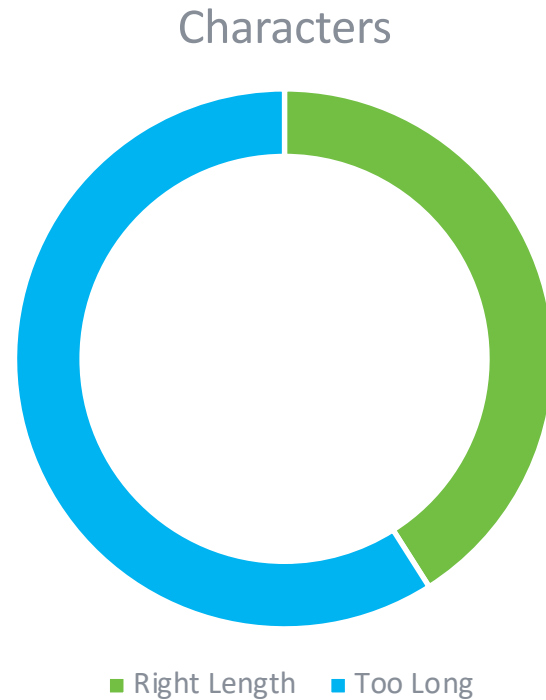
## CLEAR AND DIRECT

- Unambiguous – can lead to trust from subscribers
- Consistent and predictable content at whatever interval works for your organization
- Ability to distinguish between regular and urgent communications

## CLICKBAIT

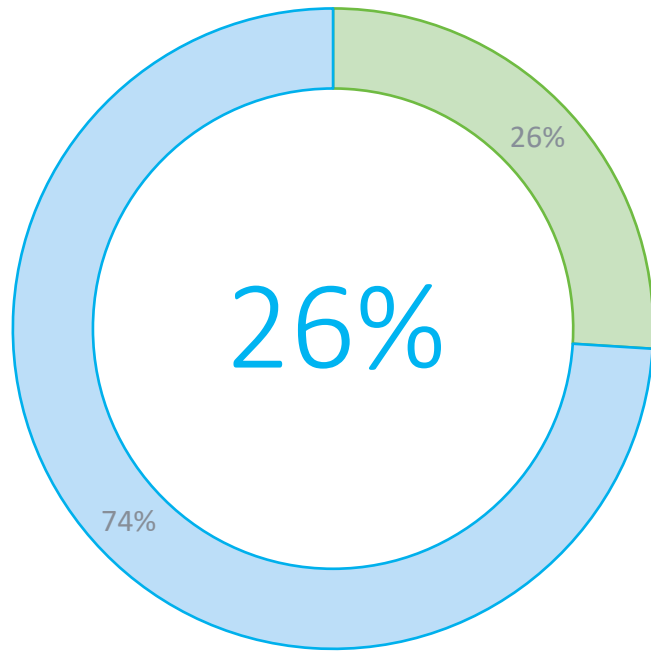
- Ability to be humorous or mysterious and intrigue subscribers
- Separate yourself from the crowd
- Be memorable

# SUBJECT LINE LENGTH



According to data from Marketo, 41 characters—or 7 words—seems to be a sweet spot for email subject line length in 2019.

# PERSONALIZATION



Emails with personalized subject lines are 26% more likely to be opened. - Experian

**Empower children like Mauricio** - Meet the self-proclaimed "luckiest man in the world" View this email in your browser July eNews Meet the self-proclaimed "luckiest man in the world" ...


**[July Newsletter] Music therapy for preemies, pregnancy as an endurance sport, dad's postpartum #UnspokenStories** - A roundup of this month's news MARCH OF DIMES July Newsl...

**[Invite] Get an Insider Look at Peer-to-Peer Fundraising** - Thursday, May 23rd 2:00 PM An Insider's Look at Qgiv's Peer-to-Peer Participant Fundraising Tools Dear Valued Customer, Pe...

**ANNOUNCING: The Summer Sale** - Don't miss out. Shop now and save on clothing, luggage, and accessories for outdoorsmen and women from the King Ranch Saddle Shop. ...

**End of July Savings: Inside!** - STANDING UP FOR UNION MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES SINCE 1986 July Featured Benefits Explore Special Travel Savings from Hertz Now May Be th...

**The Buzz: Guess Who Edition** - mySWL Hi Team! Please do not reply to this email. Respond in Community via the links below. Instant Alert The Buzz: Guess Who Edition in Community ...

 **Act now: Conference prices increase soon** - Prices go up at 11:30 pm on July 31.

**Firefly, we're facing an urgent health crisis** - Here's what you need to know. MARCH OF DIMES There's a health crisis in the US Despite our resources and cutting-edge research, we're ...

**Big news—don't miss out 🤩!** - You get first crack at DPM Membership (+ an exclusive lifetime deal 🎁 ) Thanks again for braving our trial Membership run, Colleen, DPM Membership ...

**Can we text you?** - Get updates faster. Make a bigger impact.

**The Buzz: Area 51 Edition** - mySWL Hi Team! Please do not reply to this email. Respond in Community via the links below. Instant Alert The Buzz: Area 51 Edition in Community News ...

# Preheader Text and Emojis

- Keep preheader text between 40-70 characters.
- Use emojis carefully. If they're not compatible this is what readers will see →







## Side Note: Attention Span

THE AVERAGE TIME SPENT READING AN EMAIL INCREASED BY NEARLY 7% TO 11.1 SECONDS BETWEEN 2011 AND 2016. (LITMUS)



# Clicks

TEXT LINKS VS. BUTTONS

## TEXT LINKS

- Can use color or bold text to set them apart
- Can you more than one per content block
- Better for less critical click needs

## BUTTONS

- Easy to spot amidst other content
- Useful for most important calls-to-action
- Require more rendering testing

# Links

Different types of links and buttons

Don't forget alt text for buttons

Don't take a vacation on your dental care!

**SAVE ON DENTAL NOW**

Need a rental for your summer road trip?

**GET UP TO 25% OFF WITH BUDGET**

**2019 Union Plus Scholarship Winners!**

108 union members and union family members were awarded \$170,000 in Union Plus Scholarships this year! Meet the winners!

**SAVE NOW**

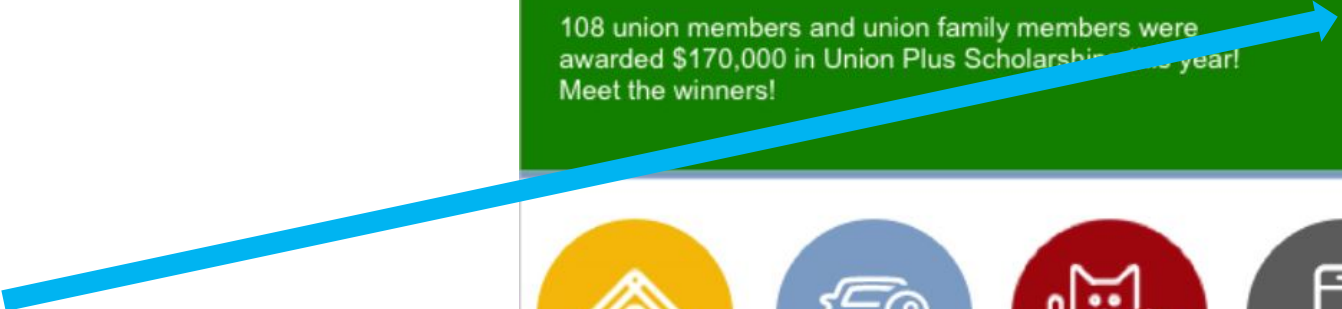
**HOTEL DISCOUNTS**

**AUTO DISCOUNTS**

**PET INSURANCE**

**AT&T DISCOUNTS**

**SIGN UP FOR SMS TEXT**



# Email Safe Fonts

- Arial
- Comic Sans MS
- Courier New
- Georgia
- Lucida Sans Unicode
- Tahoma
- Times New Roman
- Trebuchet MS
- Verdana



# UTM Codes

Parameter	Description	Example
Source*	Referrer – identify the source or sub-channel of your traffic. What platform are you using?	Jan15_newsletter, yahoo, facebook
Medium*	Marketing medium, the high level channel the link is used in. Where are you promoting it?	Email, cpc, display, social
Campaign*	What are you promoting?	Egg_em_On
Term	Identify the paid keywords or other values.	
Content	Helpful to distinguish different ad versions or a/b email tests	CTA_1, CTA_2

# Things To Remember

- Some email clients turn times and dates into clickable links
- Match your button color to your brand
- Use active verbs on buttons
- Make sure the text is short enough for mobile devices
- Track and adjust
  - In an AWeber test, buttons started off as the more effective approach, but as the novelty wore off text links started to generate more clicks.



# Images



## ON THE BLOG



### One-Step vs. Multi-Step Forms

Before you start testing forms on your website, consider the pros and cons of both one-step and multi-step forms.

[READ MORE](#)



### Five WordPress Plugins We Love

WordPress plugins can add additional security and functionality to your website. Here are a few of our favorites.

[READ MORE](#)



Thanks for downloading the Firefly Partners one-pager about donation forms. A well-designed and easy to use donation form can be a difference maker for your next campaign.

[Check out our donation forms info sheet here](#)

If you have any additional questions about fundraising best practices, you can reach us at [info@fireflypartners.com](mailto:info@fireflypartners.com), or by completing [this form](#).

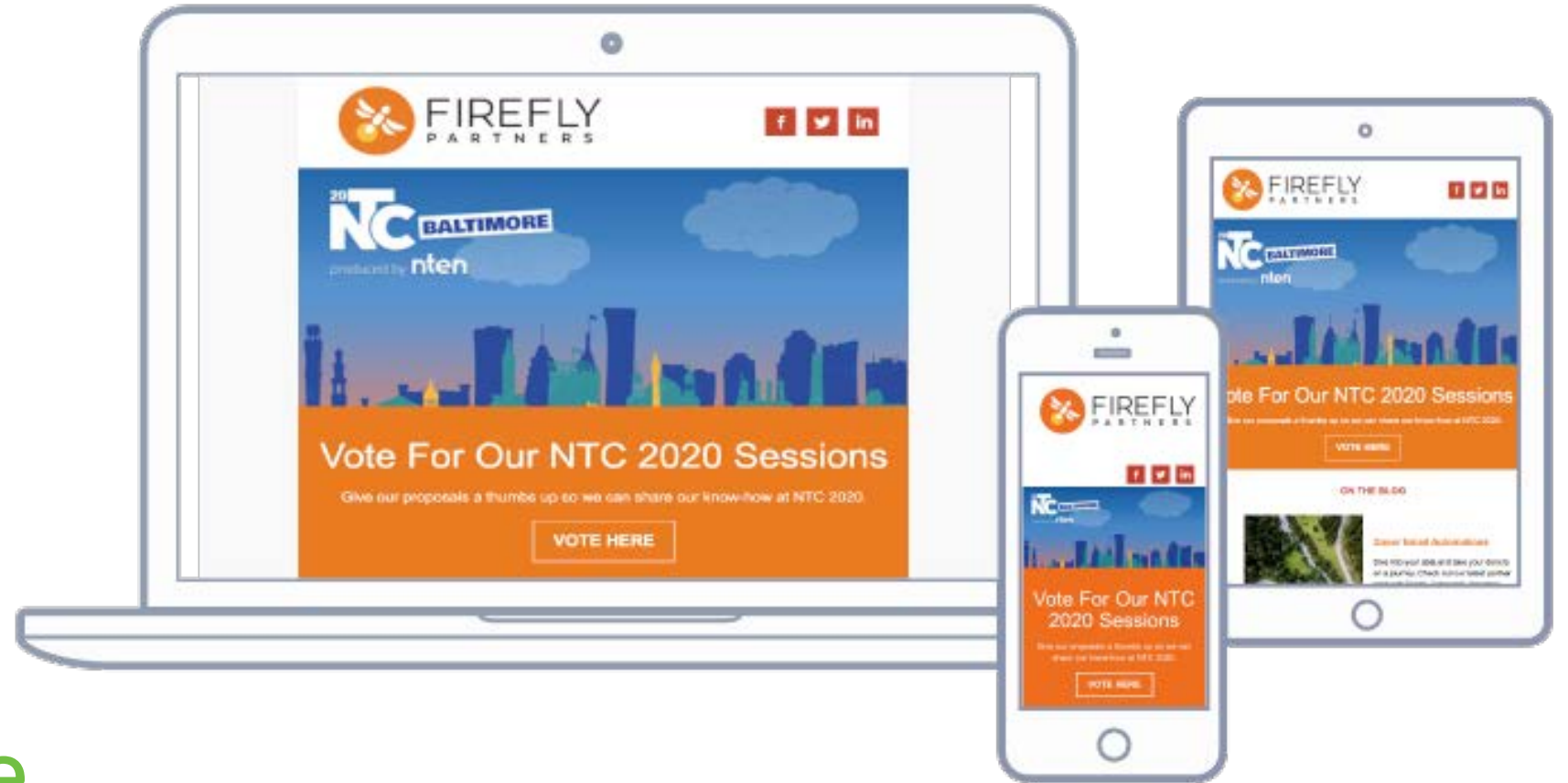
- The Firefly Partners Team

## IMAGE OPTIONS

# WIDTH

## 600 pixels wide

At widths wider than 640px Gmail doesn't show any background color. 600px is usually the sweet spot.

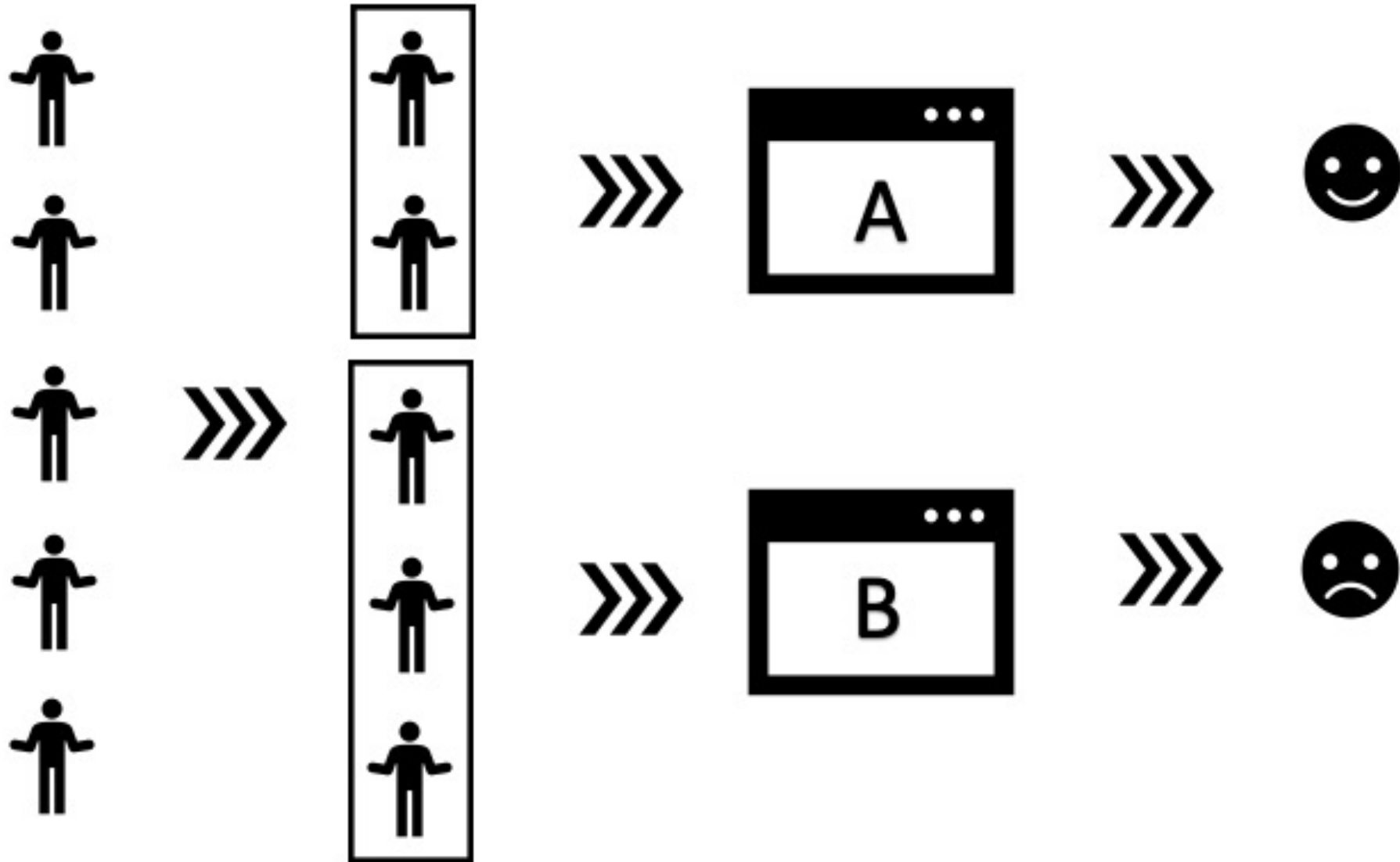


# Things To Remember

- Images can impact email orientation on mobile devices
- They might require reader to click a download button
- The bigger the email, the longer it'll take for mobile subscribers to view
- Don't forget alt text
  - Make sure that your text makes sense without the picture beside it. For example, writing something like, "as you see here," would confuse a reader who can't see the photo being referenced.
- Make sure the image syncs with the text AND that the text makes sense if the image doesn't download
- Avoid overused stock photos
- Giant images = slower load time = bad



# Testing Your Email



# A/B Testing

## What to test



- Subject lines
- Layout
- Content
- Personalization
- Images
- Calls-to-action

## How to test



- One element at a time
- Three months per test
- Split your list

## Picking a winner



- Determine KPIs first
- Create a scorecard
- Clear winner vs. more testing needed



# Rendering

EMAIL CLIENTS +

WEB-BASED EMAIL +

OPERATING SYSTEMS +

MOBILE DEVICES +

EMAIL SERVICE PROVIDER =

> 15,000 POTENTIAL EMAIL RENDERINGS



## Mitigating Issues

- USE AN EMAIL RENDERING TOOL SUCH AS LITMUS, EMAIL ON ACID, RETURN PATH, 2500K
- REVIEW REPORTS TO UNDERSTAND COMMONLY USED EMAIL CLIENTS AND DEVICES





MEASURING YOUR RESULTS + USING  
THE DATA FOR NEXT TIME

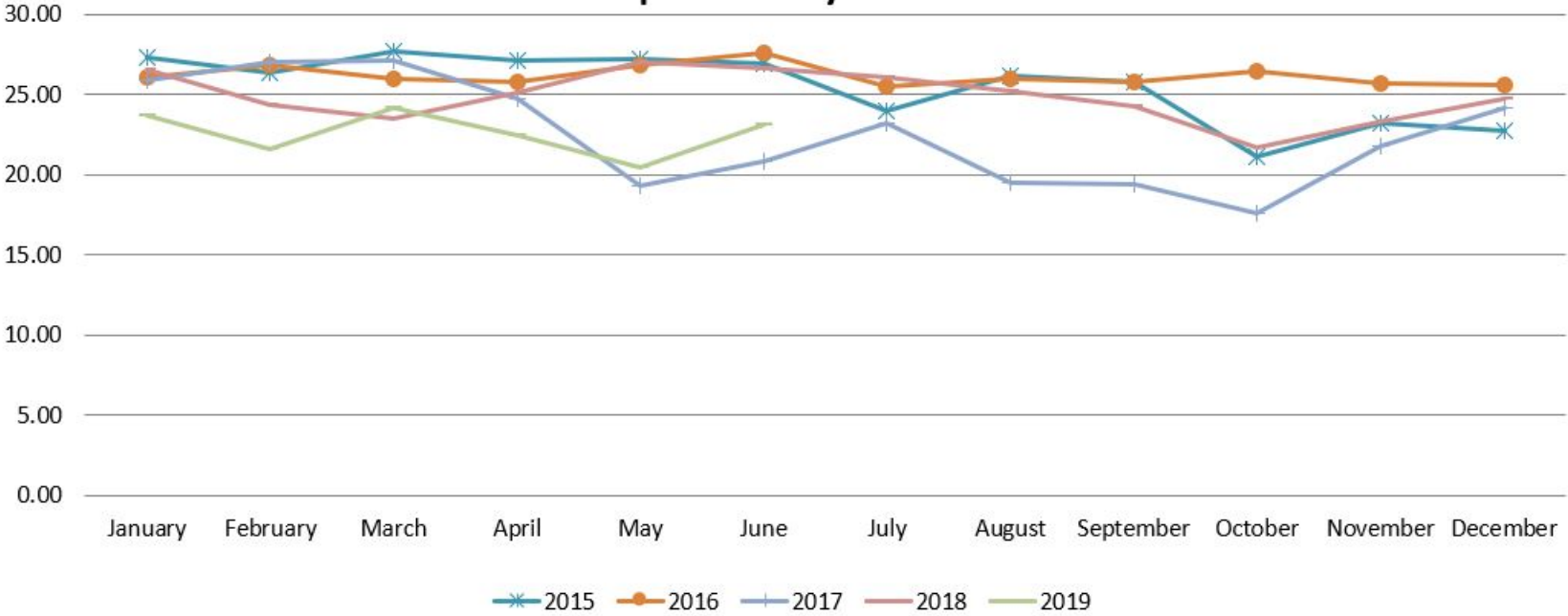




# Open Rate

- REMEMBER WHAT YOU CAN AND CAN'T CONTROL
- USE THIS STAT TO UNDERSTAND DELIVERABILITY: INBOX VS. SPAM FOLDERS
- USEFUL FOR TESTING

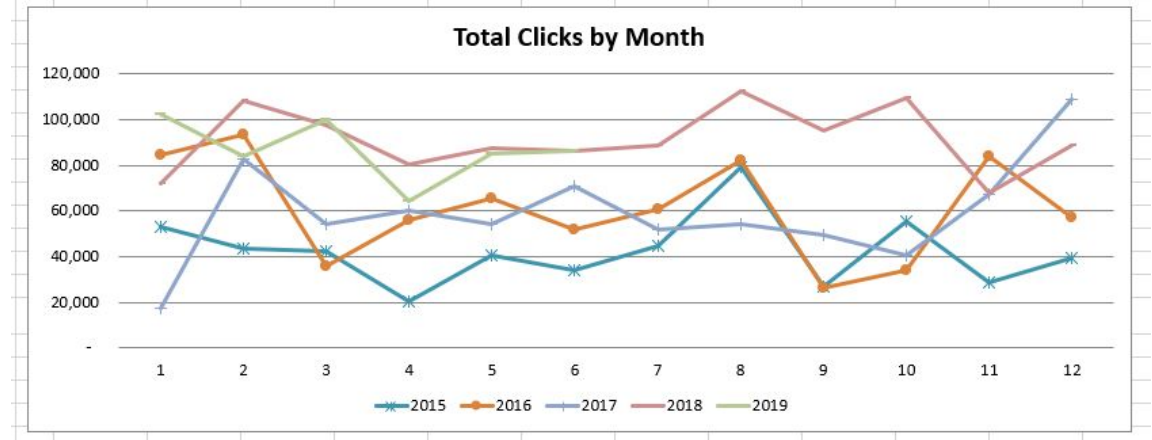
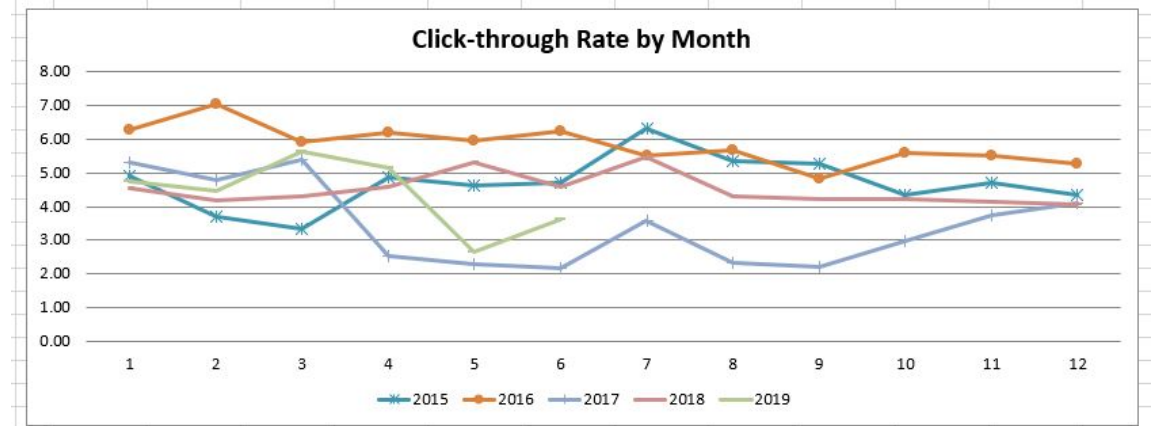
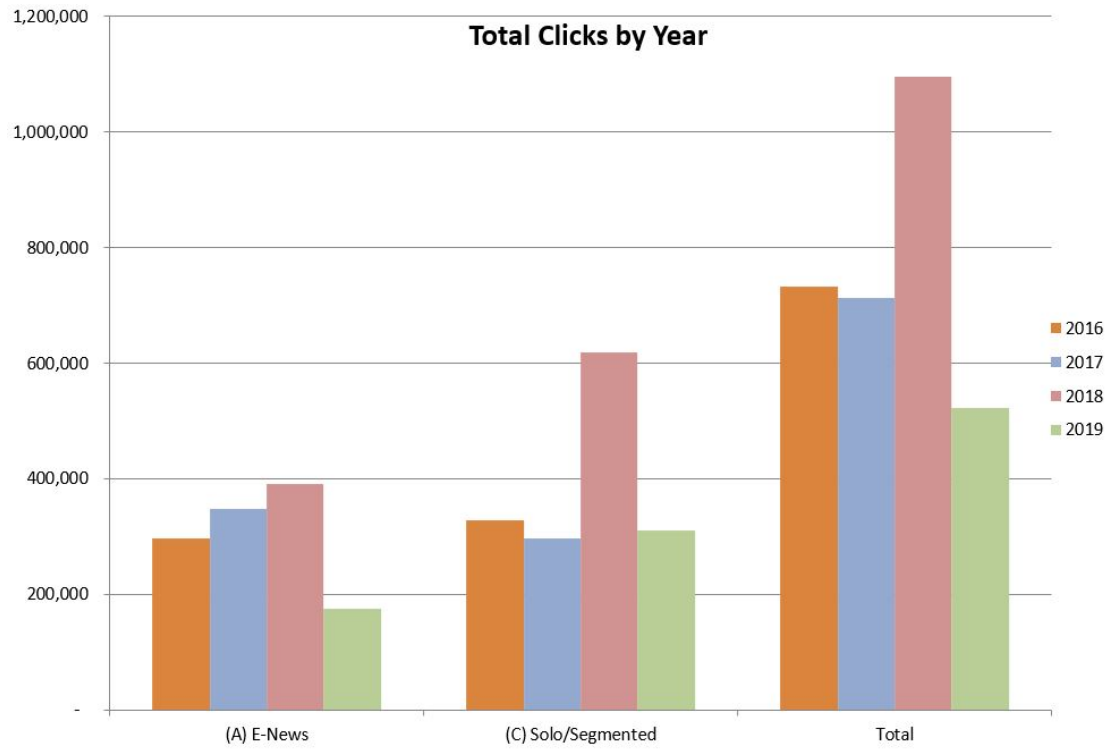
Open Rate by Month





# Click Rate

- LEARN WHAT OPENERS DID AND DID NOT LIKE
- HELPS ADAPT CONTENT AND ORDER OF CONTENT
- USEFUL FOR TESTING LAYOUT OPTIONS
- UTILIZE UTM TAGS





# Bounce Rate

- LESS YOU CAN CONTROL BUT STILL USEFUL
- TWO TYPES OF BOUNCES
- USE TO UNDERSTAND NECESSITY OF LIST CLEAN UP
- LOWERING BOUNCE RATE CAN HELP WITH DELIVERABILITY AND STAT ACCURACY



# Unsubscribe Rate

- BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR CONTENT'S SUCCESS
- WHAT TYPE OF EMAIL TO SEND AND WHEN
- DON'T PANIC – UNSUBS ARE BETTER THAN SPAM
- NO NEED TO HIDE YOUR UNSUB LINK IN A CONFUSING PLACE OR WITH TINY TEXT



# Conversion Rate

- WHAT COUNTS AS A CONVERSION?
- THINK ABOUT IT AS ROI ON YOUR SEND
- COMPARE WITH CLICK RATE TO CHOOSE WHERE TO DIRECT PEOPLE TO ON YOUR SITE
- IS IT TIME TO REVISE YOUR LANDING PAGE?

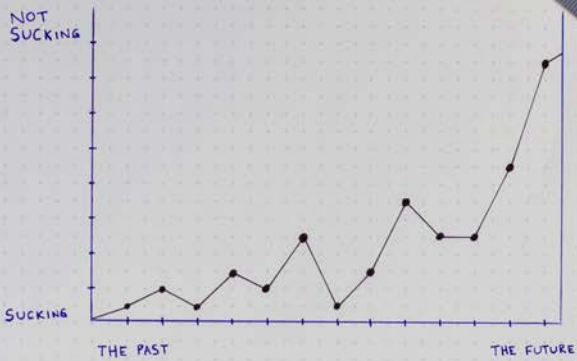




# Making Decisions

# How to know what's working

- USE YOUR OWN DATA
- KEEP TRACK OF PERFORMANCE MONTH OVER MONTH
- DIG INTO BENCHMARKS



# 2019 Blackbaud Luminate Online Benchmarks

14.12%



FUNDRAISING EMAIL  
OPEN RATE

.77%



FUNDRAISING EMAIL  
CLICK RATE

.04%



FUNDRAISING EMAIL  
CONVERSION RATE

2019 Blackbaud Luminate Online<sup>®</sup> Benchmark Report. Check out the session on the report during the conference!

# 2019 Blackbaud Luminate Online Benchmarks

14.98%



eNEWS EMAIL  
OPEN RATE

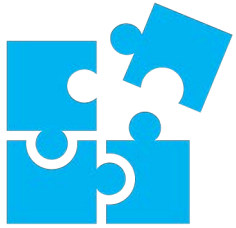
1.47%



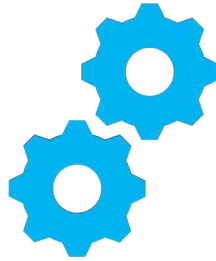
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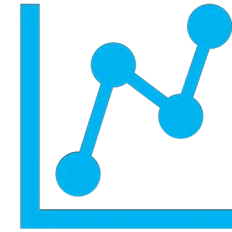
# Key Takeaways



- Design emails that work for your nonprofit
- Consider layout, subject lines, links, and images



- Test different variations
- One element at a time
- Run tests for 3-6 months



- Document your results
- Compare with existing benchmarks

LEARN  
MORE

To learn more about what was included in this agenda, visit:

[fireflypartners.com/bbcon](https://fireflypartners.com/bbcon)



# LET'S CONNECT

Find us at booth 707 for a  
free 10-minute consultation.



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facebook.com/fireflypartners



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INSPIRED?  
WIRED?  
FIRED UP?

Tell us in a session survey on the mobile app, and you'll be entered to win a complimentary pass to bbcon 2020 in Seattle, WA!

THANK YOU!

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