



CU eComm Program Email Marketing Best Practices

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What is eComm?

The CU eComm program offers University of Colorado schools, colleges, units and departments a unified platform for electronic communications with alumni, donors, parents and/or friends via a suite of web-based tools.



Watch the video at <http://ecomm.cu.edu>

Why use eComm?

Units across the system have a need to communicate with various audiences, internally and externally. To accomplish this goal, units are utilizing a variety of channels to deliver their messaging.

These decentralized practices *negatively* impact data access, integrity and security; branding of the University; federal legislation such as CAN SPAM; cross-unit and campus coordination and collaboration; calendaring; fundraising; and perception of the University among alumni, donors, students, faculty/staff, parents and friends.

The CU eComm program works to resolve the aforementioned issues while also providing valuable resources to eComm administrators that will:

1. Empower them to be better communicators,
2. Provide tools to engage their constituents more effectively,
3. Save money

If that didn't convince you, read more at <http://ecommerce.cu.edu/home2/about/why-use-ecommerce/>.

Legal Considerations

Do you have an extra \$2 million in your department's budget? If so, you can stop reading now. If not, CAN-SPAM legislation is a big deal and is not to be taken lightly.

Lucky for you, eComm keeps you compliant. We've embedded an unsubscribe link in every email template.

How does affect this me at CU?

Learn more about the CAN-SPAM legislation and how it affects CU at <http://ecom.cu.edu/home2/user-support/can-spam-legislation/>.

Find your email template at <http://ecom.cu.edu/home2/template-options/>.



Email Marketing Best Practices

Personalize your email

Research and common sense show that personalized emails increase open rates and engagement. Here are some really easy tips to help get your emails noticed.

Create & Manage Lists

Be strategic about your query

Don't blast the entire world with information that doesn't relate to them. Your query or list should *only* include those who will directly benefit from the information in your email. It's better to send a message to ten people who all open the email than to send to 100 people and annoy 90 of them.

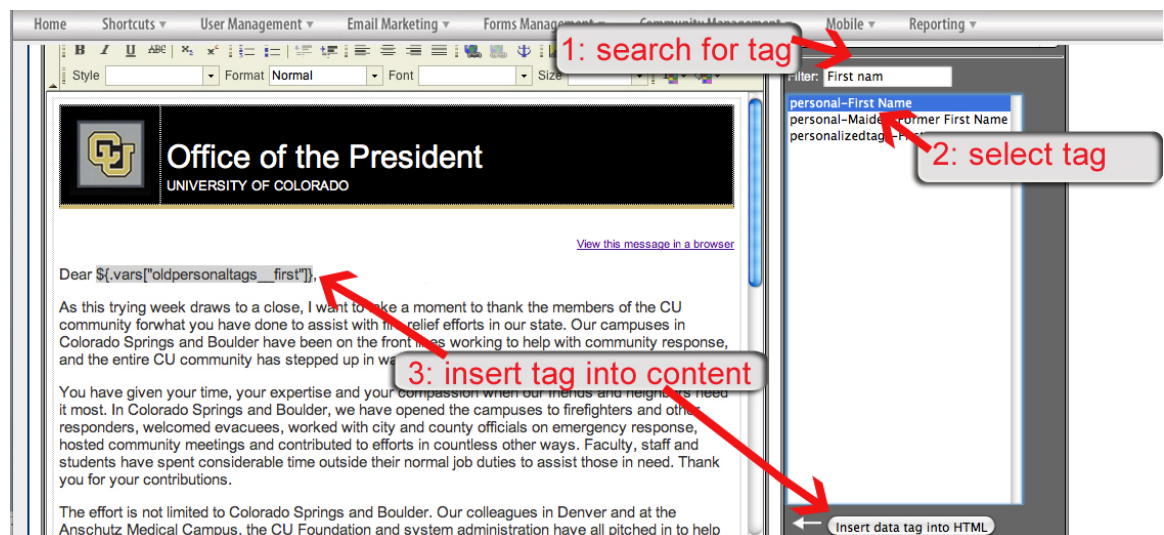
Create & Manage Content

Email Templates

If you haven't seen our eComm templates, be sure to take a look here <http://ecomm.cu.edu/template-options/>. They've been thoroughly tested and designed to meet CU brand standards.

Data tags

eComm knows a lot about each constituent. Insert data tags to customize messages so the email appears to have been created just for the recipient. For example, insert a *first name* tag which is much more engaging than just saying "Dear CU Alum."



Conditional tags

Conditional tags allow you to customize one message to different recipients.

Images

Storing Images:

- Find and store your images the Email Marketing File Library: **Email Marketing > File Manager > Campus > Unit's Name**
- Do not store images on a desktop or on a shared drive at CU. They will not appear in the sent message.

Resize Images:

- Resize images in Photoshop
 - Use the save option: Save for web and devices
 - Save as .jpg or .png

- Do not try to resize images within the Harris editor, as this changes the height and width of images, but does not reduce the file size of the actual image
 - If you must modify an image within Harris, use the corners of the image and never the sides of the image

Image Size:

- **Horizontal header** (*such as the logo and school name across the top of the email*) images must be 600px (wide) x 245px (height)
 - The height is flexible, it can be increased to 300px or more depending on the proportions of the image
- **Image size** (*image within body copy*) should be approximately 150 pixels (px) x 100px or 250px x 250 px
- **Image file size** should be **less than 250kb**
- Keep the images proportionate, and in line with text
- Do not use too many images in one email
 - This makes the file size too large and
 - The email will download slowly or not at all
- Use “alternate text”
 - This is text that will appear if your constituent does not download images in email or on their phone to let them know something is supposed to be in this location
 - Keep the description short, ex: “1952 Class Photo”

Your message should be:

- Relevant to your recipients
- Short and sweet
- Compelling visuals are always helpful
- Include a call to action

Must haves:

All of the following elements are included in our eComm email templates. If you do, you’ll be sorry!

- Unsubscribe link
- Link to your [University of Colorado campus online communities](#)
- Open count tag
- Contact info in footer, include address, phone, website and email

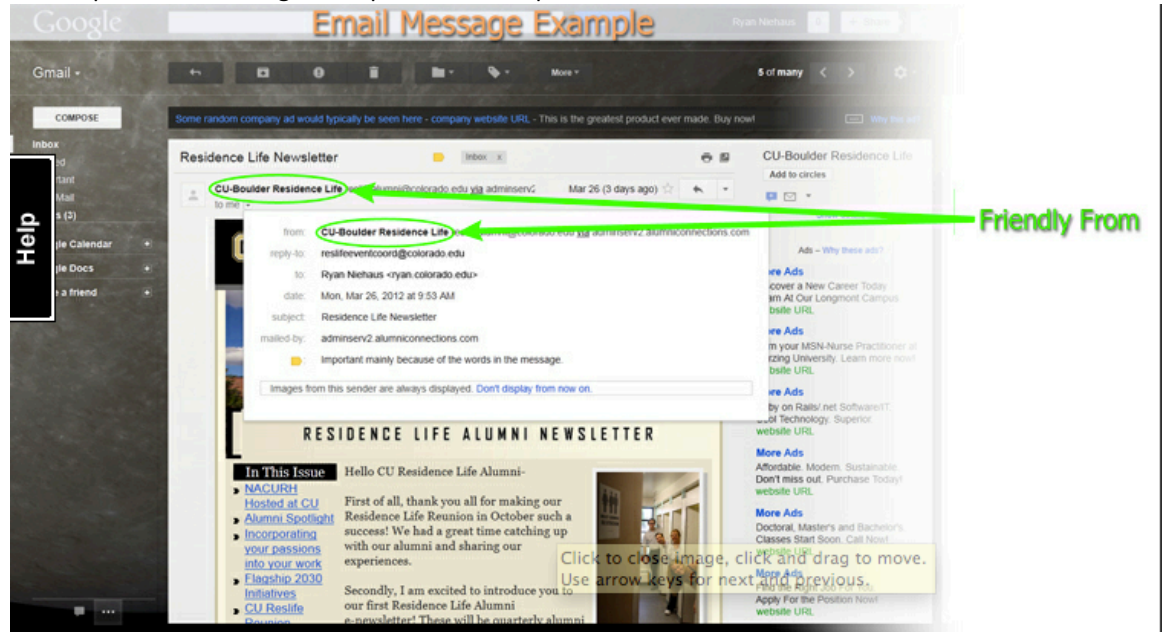
Address & Assemble

Address & Assemble is one of the most important aspects of building out your email because it's the first thing people see when they receive your message.

Friendly Froms

A Friendly From definition is another way of saying from whom the email is coming. It should be from someone they recognize. For example, From the Dean of Arts & Sciences will get more opens than From Joe Nobody. If you need your definitions updated or changed, contact your [eComm specialist](#).

A note about Gmail: Make sure your Friendly from is less than 25 characters because Gmail will strip the entire thing and replace it with a period. NO!!!



From email address

The From email address is displayed next to and should relate to the Friendly From. It looks strange to recipients if the Friendly From reads *Chancellor Somebody [joe.nobody@cu.edu]*. A better option would be *Chancellor Somebody [chancellor somebody@cu.edu]* or even *[school of X@cu.edu]*— even if Joe Nobody is monitoring that inbox.

One more thing, the From email address should be an alias email address that your leader is not monitoring (unless they give their permission).

Reply-to email address

The Reply-to email address can be the same as the From email address or different. This is a great place to have emails go to joenobody@cu.edu.

Note that out-of-office and other auto-replies are delivered to the Reply-to email address.

To field

This is a great opportunity to include personalized information first name by using a harris data tag such as first name and last name. Remember, the more you customize your email, the more likely your recipients will open your email.

Note that this is in the email *header* not in the email's body content.

BCC

BCC should include all internal people that you might want to receive the email when it is delivered. You might want to include your boss, your boss's boss and your boss's boss's boss. A BCC recipient will see the word "SENT" preceding the subject line, therefore serving as a confirmation that the email was sent.

Subject

Hello? Is this really that hard? Make it sweet, simple and relevant. It should be 50 characters or less. If "CU" isn't in your Friendly From, be sure to include it in your subject line. Stats show there are improved open rates when the word CU is in the subject line.

Categories

Selecting the proper category ensure we are CAN-SPAM compliant and that recipients receive only the emails they want to receive. So, in short THIS IS IMPORTANT.

- **Spam doesn't always come in a can.**
Here are a few helpful tips to keep your email from being considered spam...
 - Use normal conversational language and always be sure not to use excessive spacing and or capitalization in your subject.

- Never say “free” or “click here!” or “click here now!” or “act now!” or “limited time!”
- Do not use “cute” spellings, don’t S.P.A.C.E out your words, don’t put strange letters or characters into your emails.
- Don’t make an HTML email is nothing but a bunch of pretty graphics. You need some text in your message, too. Otherwise, the spam filters will have nothing to read and will think your message is junk.
- Don’t send the HTML email by itself. Always include that plain-text alternative message.
- If you’re sending HTML emails, use high quality HTML coding. Don’t use tools which generate horrendous HTML (example: MS Word). They often leave signs behind (like empty tags, eg:) which are generally found in spam. Unbalanced tags and invalid tags will also flag an email as spam.
- For more tips on avoiding the junk folder, visit <http://mailchimp.com/resources/guides/html/email-marketing-field-guide/#designing-around-spam-filters>

Testing... testing... 1, 2, 3.

Musicians don’t go on stage without doing a sound check and you shouldn’t be sending an email without testing, testing, and testing again! You would be surprised at how differently your email will look in Gmail as compared to Yahoo and on an iPhone compared to on an Android.

Before sending your email, be sure to test its layout and design in a number of different email clients and web environments. Develop a network of office peers or select constituents to send your test emails so a fresh pair of eyes can always proofread your hard work before it hits the masses. If you work on a deserted island by yourself or have no friends to send to, set up a few mock email accounts and send tests to those accounts.

Below are some recommended test environments:

Web clients:

Gmail, Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo

Desktop clients:

Microsoft Outlook, Outlook Express, Windows (Mac) Apple Mail, Entourage

Web browsers:

Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari, Chrome

Mobile devices:

Android, Blackberry, iPhone, Windows Phone

Send & Schedule

Timing

Recipients are more likely to open emails during the workweek, earlier in the day. The best time to send an email is earlier in the workweek, right around the time that the recipients gets in to work. The highest volume days for emails are Tuesdays and Thursdays, so you may try to avoid these days.

Schedule your email as soon as all pieces are in place, but wait to approve until you have tested thoroughly. Putting your email on the calendar will ensure that no two emails are going to the same audience on the same day, which will keep our recipients happy and not annoyed.

Frequency

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eComm calendaring

The calendar

As much as we all love CU, imagine if you were receiving many communications from your alma mater in a single day. How many of those emails would you be likely to read? How many days in a row would you receive multiple communications before unsubscribing entirely?

Our central email calendar enables us to track the number of emails our constituent groups receive in a single day.

Reviewing this calendar and selecting a send date that does not contain messages to your constituent group ensures that we will not annoy our constituents and increases the likelihood that your email will be read.

Audience Overlap

If the school of pharmacy is sending an email communication to alums on the same day as the CU Foundation inviting loyal Boulder donors to a dinner, there may be some overlap, but that overlap is likely to be small enough not to frustrate a large number of recipients. With that said, if one of the emails can be delayed to a day when there are no communications going out, we can ensure that there is no overlap. Use your judgement.

"But our email is more important than this other email and we have to send on this day!"

Ask your campus eComm specialist to communicate with the party sending the message to your constituent group. If it is critical that you send one one day and not the next, we may be able to help you find a solution that works for everyone.

Reporting / Analytics

Now that you're a pro at sending amazing emails, make your next round even better. Taking the time to review your email delivery statistics is critical. Experiment with open, click, unsubscribe and bounce-back rates as well as subject line, personalized data tags in your content, html design and timing of delivery.

One more thing that's outside of the eComm world; check your website traffic logs after each email campaign. Does traffic pick up?

Use these metrics to inform how to build your next email campaign.

User Groups

Attend an eComm Users Group on your campus. Meet other eComm administrators, share tips and tricks and learn best practices. Find a Users Group session near you at <http://ecommerce.cu.edu/user-groups/>.

Your eComm Specialist

Don't worry. There's always someone there to help. Meet your eComm specialist today at <http://ecomm.cu.edu/groups/users/ecomm-program-managers/>.