



Email marketing campaign guidelines SMS-Timing clients

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INTRODUCTION

You want your clients to see your emails, isn't it? You want them to open your emails, right? And you want them to click in these emails, probably. Then this document is made for you. Reading it carefully and applying most of the techniques explained will greatly help you to reach better results with your email marketing campaigns.

First of all, be aware that **an email marketing campaign is not just "I create a big picture, few lines of text and just send it"!** That was true a decade ago. Nowadays, getting an email in the inbox of your contacts requires a lot of different technical, editorial and graphical knowledge. Fortunately, you can count on professionals for that. SMS-Timing works with a partner, Email Vision, for the technical knowledge. We take care of the graphical part and give you valuable advice about the editorial techniques.



Example of a really bad mailing

When you are about to create an email marketing campaign, ask yourself **“To who will I send my email? Why? And how?”** It means “I will segment my database. I have a purpose to send this email. And I will integrate various email marketing techniques to do so.

Are you sure that what you send is always interesting and covers various topics? The best way to insure it is to plan your contents. It’s as simple as this: **take a calendar and plan** one email marketing campaign per month for the next half year. Or two email marketing campaigns per month for the upcoming trimester. This will mechanically make you think about different possible topics and help organize your business. In case you often send email marketing campaigns, ask yourself about the commercial pressure: the amount of campaigns over a certain time period. Also think **about segmenting your database** if you don’t do it yet. It’s essential.

Last but not least, keep in mind that **the better your statistics are, the more efficient your campaigns will be!**

It’s now time to see together what to do to prepare a successful email marketing campaign.

PREPARE YOUR CONTENTS

CHOOSE ONE TOPIC PER CAMPAIGN

Do you want to announce an event, a promotion and an exceptional opening date at the same time? Bad idea! **Always focus on one idea per campaign.** Otherwise, your recipients won't know how to process that email. In case you want any way to propose various contents (such as what's new next month for instance), go for the newsletter format. You will need to write more contents and in that case, don't try to sell, don't be too direct.

WRITE YOUR CONTENTS

Once you know the topic of your email marketing campaign, you simply have to write some contents. Sounds easy? Not as much as it seems. First of all, **keep the style simple** and avoid technical terms or words you use internally. 95% of your clients probably don't know much about karting.

A very important practice: **do not use "spam-words"**. For example, "Exceptional", "free", "gratis", etc. There's no exhaustive list and some words are worse than others. You can search for them on Google to get more examples. Also, don't use too many exclamation marks (!!!).

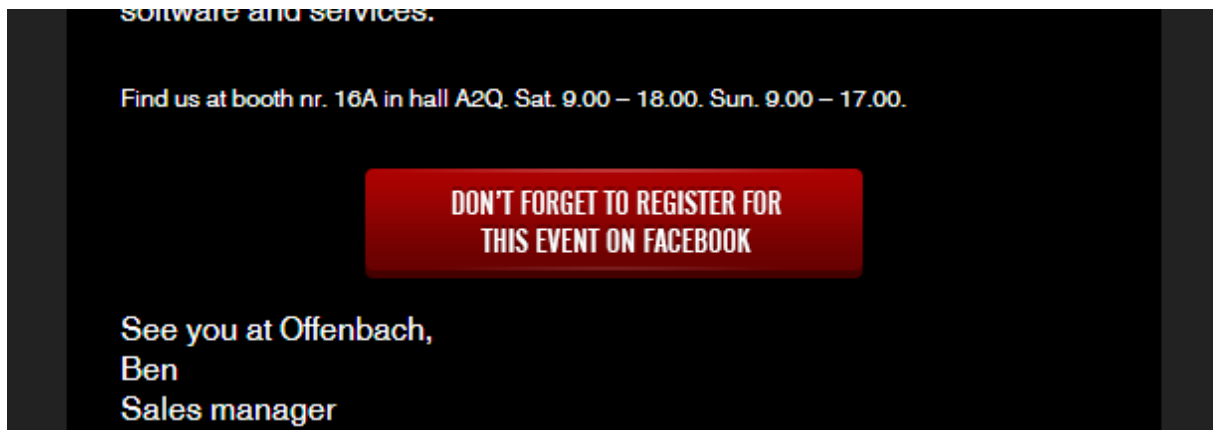
Last but not least, make sure there are **no spelling mistakes** in your campaigns. If you aren't good at spelling yourself, have someone else proofread your contents.

Spam-words, intensive use of punctuation and spelling mistakes are typical of spammers. If you don't pay attention to it, you will most likely appear like a spammer too, which obviously results in a bad delivery rate.

PERSONALIZE YOUR EMAIL... WITH RELEVANT DATA

Here, we talk about the most common item: "Dear [FirstName] [LastName]," to start an email. Using these tags already make your contents more customized. But there are more possibilities! You target your best drivers for a special race? As an example, write in your contents "Your best lap time is [BestTime]! You are invited to our special 2H race." Think about various possibilities about the **personalization of your contents**. But pay attention, don't over-personalize by using too many tags. The recipient will feel it and you will reach the opposite effect of what you were looking for.

CALL-TO-ACTION: AN ESSENTIAL ITEM



An image-based call-to-action

A “call-to-action” is a **way to increase the click-through rate**, that is to say the percentage of the recipients who opened the email and clicked on something. This is one of the most important items of this guide (read more about it in the “Statistics” part). For every email campaign you send, **you must ask the recipients to do some kind of thing**. In other words, you CALL them TO take ACTION.

There are several ways to get people to click in your email (banner, other images, etc). But the most efficient is to make clear to them that they can read more about the topic of this email on your website. In that case, you need to have **a clear link about it, which can be at the end of your contents but also at the beginning of your email**. A “call-to-action” can be “Like us on Facebook and receive a karting session”, or “Subscribe now to this event!”. Please note that a link to an email address can’t be traced, so the click-through rate will remain low.

NOT TOO MANY IMAGES AND A GOOD USE OF THEM

Unsubscribe me from this list - mij uitschrijven uit deze lijst



2E BALLENSPEL VOOR € 2,- TIJDENS DE CARNAVALSVAKANTIE • DE VOLTAGE TILBURG

Ballen Dagen tijdens de Carnavalsvakantie
2e ballenspel voor € 2,-!

Het zijn "De Ballen Dagen" bij De Voltage. Kom na de carnaval je balgevoel weer op scherp zetten met een van onze balspellen. Het 2e spel voor maar 2 euro.
Je kan kiezen uit Cuban Bowling, The Adventure Bowling, Bungee Soccer en ons nieuwe spel Poolball en nog een voordeel we zijn deze dagen al om 12:00u open (zondag 13:00)

Hoe het werkt?

- Kies bijvoorbeeld Bungee Soccer en het spel Poolball. Je betaalt dan voor Bungee soccer de normale prijs en voor poolbal slechts 2 euro.
- Je krijgt de korting op de voordeligste activiteit.
- Actie geldig 13-14-15-16 en 17 februari

Doe je liever 2 X hetzelfde? Ook dat mag! Bijvoorbeeld 2 uur lang Cubaans bowlen. Of 2 games bungee soccer. Wat jij wilt?

Reserveren is verplicht i.v.m. de drukte en vergeet niet om aan te geven dat je van deze voordeelactie gebruik wil maken. Bel 013-580 00 07 of mail naar info@devoltage.nl

Aangepaste openingstijden

Aangezien heel Brabant het komende weekend plat ligt in verband met de carnaval en druk is met hoempapa muziek en gerstenat, vieren wij dat feestje maar gewoon mee :)
Wij hebben tijdens de carnaval dus aangepaste openingstijden:

Zaterdag	9 februari	12:00-19:30
Zondag	10 februari	GESLOTEN
Maandag	11 februari	GESLOTEN
Dinsdag	12 februari	GESLOTEN (kantoor vanaf 09:00-17:00 wel bereikbaar)

EXTRA OPEN:

Woensdag	13 februari	12:00 open
Donderdag	14 februari	12:00 open
Vrijdag	15 februari	12:00 open
Zaterdag	16 februari	12:00 open
Zondag	17 februari	13:00 open

A good balance of text vs. pictures in a newsletter-format mail

Sending just a picture is a huge mistake. We even don't accept this anymore as valid contents. The spam-filters can't read what is in written in an image. Few years ago, spammers understood that and especially used this technique to deliver their message. What happened then is that these filters block emails with a big image since they assume it's a spam-email. Sending only text isn't the right way either. So you have to find the right balance between pictures and text. A **good practice is 60% text and 40% pictures**, visually. Keep in mind that your email campaigns already include a banner in your template, which remains the same. What changes is the pictures you add per campaign, in relation with the topic.

A problem is that most of the recipients don't turn on the display of images by default. As a consequence, most of the recipients can't see the images until they turn them on. So you have to foresee a sentence, called "**ALT tag**" (stands for Alternative text) in order to let the recipients see what you mean with your pictures. Plus, an email opened but without clicking on a link or turning on the image display is considered as "not opened" in the statistics (read more after in this guide) and is called a "silent user".

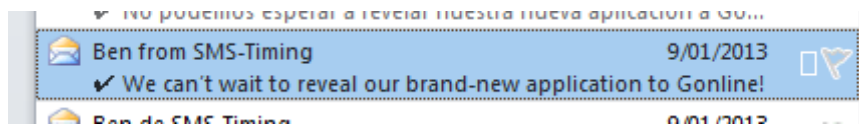
Information must be in text, the pictures are made to highlight the contents.

CHOOSE YOUR SUBJECT AND PRE-HEADER

Now you wrote down your contents, avoided spam-words, set up the “call-to-action” and chose your pictures, it’s time to **find the right title (“Subject”)** for your email marketing campaign. Only do it when your contents are ready and not the other way around. The subject is a very difficult part of an email campaign, don’t underestimate it! In fact, **this small line of text is the greatest influencing factor of the “Opening rate”**. That means this item will most make the recipients open your email or not (amongst other techniques, read more after). Do not announce something that is minor information in your contents, or something totally not true. Try to **tease your audience** to make them curious and thus open the email. Keep it simple, be short (around 65 characters) and do not repeat your business name, since you will already include it in the “sender” field. **Another important item is the “Pre-header”**. This is a longer sentence (or few short sentences) that will help convincing recipients to open your email. Many ISP (Internet Service Provider) such as Orange and webmail providers such as Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo, etc display in one line the “Sender”, the “Subject” and then the beginning of a sentence: the “pre-header”. When recipients are able to see that, it gives them an extra incentive to open your email. So **tell a little bit more about the topic** you chose there. The “Pre-header” is also the perfect place to **add the Unsubscribe link** (read more about it after) and to advise people to add you to their contact list, which is called the **“Green list”**. This way, all of your emails will arrive in their mailbox.

YOUR SENDER NAME AND RESPONSE EMAIL ADDRESS

The “Sender name” is also very important. In fact, **the recipients need to see who is sending them an email**. If they don’t recognize it (“Contact”, “Info”, “Sales” for example) or if it’s too impersonal (“Karting city”), some of them will be less likely to open your email. The best practice is to **add a name, followed by the company name**. For example “Ben from SMS-Timing”. Use a name of a real person who works at your company, preferably the person who is “the face” of the company (for example, your sales responsible or a charismatic employee). This creates more trust.



The response email address is a mark of professionalism. It’s much better to use ...@companyname.com than companyname@gmail.com for example. Also, keep in mind that an email is made to be answered to, so **avoid noreply@...**, which clearly isn’t suitable for business! And of course, this raises the chance to end-up in the spam-box.

WHEN TO SEND YOUR CAMPAIGN?

Obviously, it depends on the business you are in. In the leisure sector, you can easily understand that sending an email on a Monday morning at 08.30 isn't a good idea. The best is to send on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday at the end of the day or during the week-end. **The "Sending time" affects the "Opening rate"**. You should always test different time for your sendings and analyze them (read after).

After these steps, your email is fully prepared. Now we will see to who you will send it.

SEGMENTATION

TO WHO YOU NEED TO SEND YOUR CAMPAIGN

The screenshot shows a segmentation tool interface with four filter sections:

- GENDER:** Filter set to "equals" with a value of "1".
- LANGUAGE:** Filter set to "equals" with "Case sensitive" unchecked and "ENG" selected.
- LAST_VISIT:** Filter set to "after" with the date "11/01/2012" and "Time sensitive" unchecked.
- DATEOFBIRTH:** Filter set to "before" with the date "02/01/1992" and "Time sensitive" unchecked.

Each filter section includes a "TOP 100 VALUES" button, a "COUNT" button, a "+ CRITERIA" button, and a "Move to" dropdown menu.

The first thing to keep in mind is **"Less is more"**! You will reach less result by sending the same email to 100% of your database than sending your email to certain group(s) of customers. As soon as you have **a database of 1000 customers, you can start to segment it**. Nowadays, people are still willing to receive publicity in email format, but for something that interests them. That's why you must split your database depending on the topic of your email (examples will be given after). You don't want to invite drivers with lap times of 55 seconds for Top racers endurances with lap times of 45 seconds! They won't feel you wanted to send this email specifically for them.

Sending a segmented email marketing campaign also allows you to send more campaigns! Instead of sending 4 different campaigns to your whole database, it's highly recommended to send 1 campaign to 4 different groups (segments). A large part of your customers will receive 1 out of these 4, completely dedicated to them. Therefore, it's possible to send another one, with another promotion to another group of people without annoying them with something not made for them. That's how you can **send more campaigns and reach better results**.

Last but not least, segmenting will **save emailing credits**. With our Email marketing service, 1 email targeted consumes 1 credit. By sending an email campaign to a certain target, you will save credits (less credits consumed, credits better used thanks to a higher opening and click-through rates).

EXAMPLES

4 situations, 4 email campaigns:

- You organize **an endurance open to everybody**: target the customers who visited you during the last 6 months.
- You organize **a Ladies Night**: target women with 18+. You can also adapt your contents and target men with main point as “Tell your girl to join our Ladies Night” with a “tell-a-friend” Call-to-action.
- You organize **a Discovery Race for rookies**: target drivers with a slow best lap time and who visited you during the last 6 months. Announce you will show them how to take curves, how to behave on a wet track, etc.
- You organize **a VIP Race for your best drivers**: target the ones with a fast best lap time.

These are 4 distinct groups who will most likely receive only 1 out of 4 email campaigns. Remember: **high statistics directly mean better results and more customers in your business!**

INACTIVE USERS: HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM?

WHO ARE THEY AND WHY NOT CONTACT THEM?

An “Inactive user” is a person who doesn’t open your emails, doesn’t mark them as spam nor unsubscribe.

This person simply deletes them or leaves them unopened in his mailbox.

A “Silent user” is a person who opens your emails without displaying images and clicking anywhere. This person is probably aware of the contents of your emails, but doesn’t “process” it directly.

There is no way to distinguish an “Inactive user” from a “Silent user”. Fortunately, there is a way to identify the “Silent users” (read after). It’s important not to send any email to inactive users. Keep in mind that these persons are not interested in your emails, otherwise they would open them! So, not sending emails to them will raise your statistics, which will result in more deliverability.

WHAT TO SEND TO INACTIVE USERS?

Once or twice per year, you should create a **“reactivation campaign”**. Think about a super promotion people couldn’t refuse. Basically, the (hidden) idea behind the campaign should be “open the email, click somewhere or you will never receive my emails anymore”. Two benefits: first, the silent users will click and will be recognized as “Active”. The “Inactive users” who are interested will also become “Active” again. All the others who don’t open and click in the email will definitely be considered as “Inactive”.

WHAT IT IS AND HOW IMPORTANT IT IS

A landing page is used to **welcome people who clicked a link (the “Call-to-action”) from your email marketing campaigns**. This page from your website is especially made for a given promotion. The basics are: you send a promotion to a certain segment of your database with a clear “Call-to-action” which invites the recipients to read more or to subscribe to this topic on your website. This will **generate a high click-through rate**, which is essential for the success of your campaigns and it will also **generate traffic on your website**. Generally, use this landing page to explain more about the promotion you sent. And good news: the spam-words don't matter on this page!

Then, you can measure the **conversion rate**, which can be the amount of people who subscribed to an event via your website compared to the amount of people targeted (emails sent).

SPLIT TESTING (A/B TESTING)

WHAT IS IT?

The “Split testing” or “A/B testing” is a technique used in email marketing to **compare 2 versions of the same email marketing campaign** (version A and version B), before it’s sent to the bigger part of the segment. You can take 5% of your segment as a “Test segment”. 2.5% will receive version A and 2.5% will receive version B. By modifying one or 2 items in the email, **you will be able to see which version “worked” the best**. Then, you send the other 95% the most successful test version.

The screenshot shows a two-step process for setting up an A/B test. Step 1, 'Define campaign and recipients', is completed. Step 2, 'Define versions and samples', is active. It shows a test named 'test' for a message '3 Fahrer / 30Minuten / 3 Pizzen kostenlos'. Under '1. Select the variable you want to test', 'Subject' is chosen. Under '2. Define test versions (up to 20)', two versions are defined: 'Version 1: Control Subject' with a 5% sample, and 'Version 2' (empty) with a 5% sample. A 'Sample Selection' control is visible at the top right of the version list.

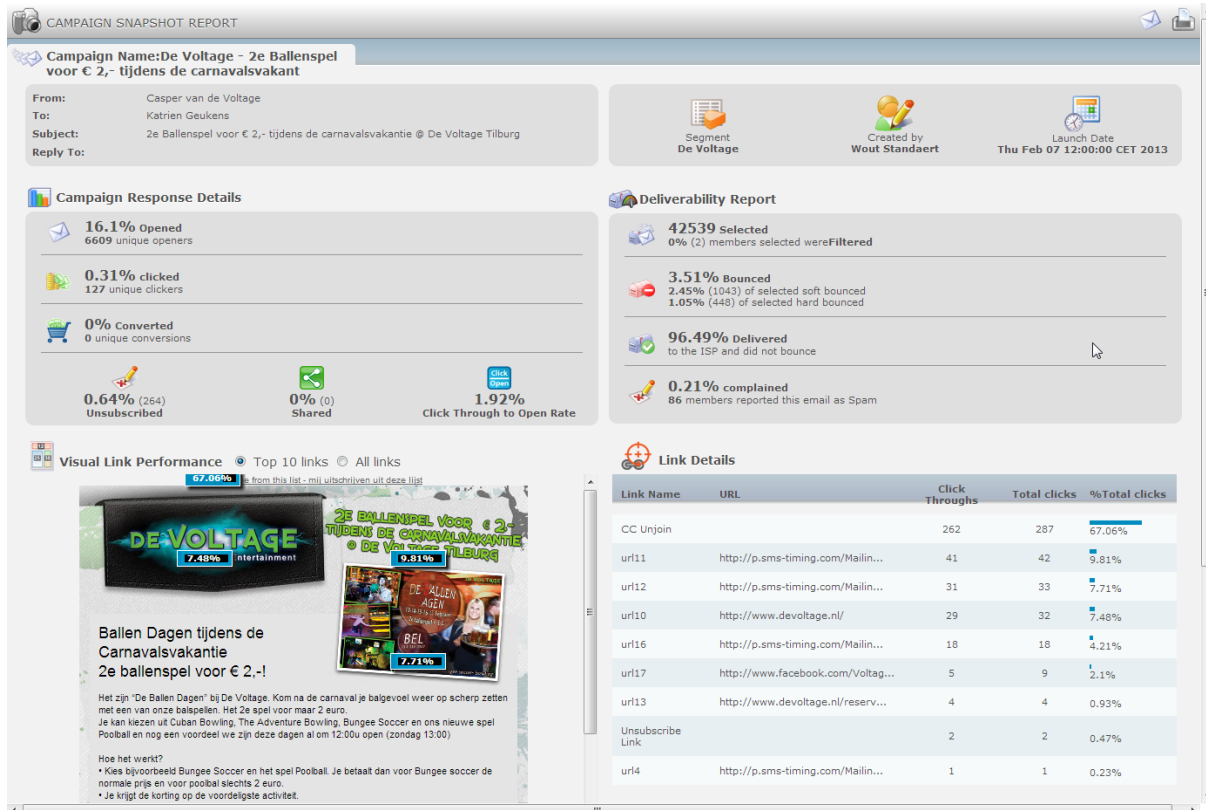
Version	Sample
Version 1: Control Subject 3 Fahrer / 30Minuten / 3 Pizzen kostenlos	5 %
Version 2	5 %

HOW TO USE IT?

First of all, don’t create two versions completely different, otherwise you won’t be able to see what made one version work better than the other one. **If you want to work on the opening rate of your campaign, test two different titles. If you want to work on the click-through rate, use two different Call-to-actions**, etc. You can use different contents, picture size, colors, etc.

STATISTICS

WHY CARE ABOUT THEM?



Statistics are often neglected. It's a pity, because how do you want to improve something you don't measure? There are no magic numbers to reach, for most of them. **It's all about testing and analyzing.**

ISP's and webmail providers first analyze your campaigns before delivering them. They will "test" a small part of it and wait for the reaction of your recipients. **If the "Opening" and the "Click-through" rate are low, the rest will be less likely to be delivered (a lot of "Soft-bounce").** On the contrary, if the campaign seems popular, there will be more chances to reach a high delivery rate.

There are basic statistics that are easily understandable and which will greatly assist you in improving your email marketing campaigns. Here is an overview of them with some examples.

MAIN STATISTICS TO ANALYZE: DEFINITIONS AND MEANINGS

DELIVERY RATE

Percentage of emails that arrive in the inbox and in the spam box. There is no way to know in which of the two it is.

This is the first indicator to check if your campaign is “healthy”.

90% delivered means that 10% didn't arrive at all (“Soft-bounce” and/or “Hard-bounce”, read after).

OPENING RATE

Percentage of recipients who open the email and displayed the images and/or clicked on a link.

The “Silent users” can't be taken into account in these statistics, so it's always a bigger number in reality.

If you reach a 15% opening rate, it means that minimum 15% of your recipients opened it.

CLICK-THROUGH RATE

As described previously, the “Click-through rate” is an essential item of your campaigns. **The more recipients click in your email, the higher this rate will be** and the better results you will reach.

Use a clear “Call-to-action” to skyrocket this rate.

A “Click-through” rate of 2% says that this part of your recipients clicked on the links or images of your email campaign.

HARD-BOUNCE

A “Hard-bounce” is an email address that doesn't exist (anymore).

To keep sending emails to these addresses is a mark of spam.

The maximum tolerated is a 5% hard-bounce rate.

SOFT-BOUNCE

A “Soft-bounce” is an email address that isn't available at that moment.

It can be that the server of your recipient is down, that the mailbox is full but most likely that there is a spam-filter on the server. It's temporarily blocked. Next campaign, it might be delivered to a given email address that was soft-bounced.

Don't go over a rate of 3%-4% soft-bounce rate.

UNSUBSCRIBE RATE

The “Unsubscribe rate” represents the part of the recipients who clicked on “Unsubscribe me from this list”.

Always offer such a link (or several) so that people who aren't interested anymore in receiving your news can unsubscribe from them.

Too many “Unsubscribes” can reveal a bad segmentation strategy or a too high “commercial pressure” (read about it in the Introduction).

COMPLAINTS RATE

The “Complaints rate” defines the share of recipients who clicked on “This is spam” or placed your email in the Spam box.

It’s much better to have a recipient clicking on “Unsubscribe” than on “This is spam”.

The maximum rate is 0.01%.

DYNAMIC CAMPAIGNS: AUTOMATE THE INFORMATION

“Dynamic campaigns” are an automated combination of email campaigns. By tracking the links in a campaign, we know which recipient clicked where. With this information, **you can send additional contents automatically**. For example, your email template includes a picture of your meeting room. If someone clicks on it and is redirected to your website page that deals with meeting rooms, another email can be sent automatically, right away or X days later, with a promotion for a group event, or simply with extra information about your services for bachelor parties or company events. If your database is well segmented, you will know if it’s a particular or a company who clicked on that link, allowing you to send the email about a bachelor party or company event.

You can set up a dynamic campaign for a specific campaign, but the easiest to start with it is to use your default template as a base, as explained in the example above.

DYNAMIC PERSONALIZATION: ADVANCED EMAIL MARKETING

This is the ultimate way to go regarding segmentation. In fact, the “Dynamic personalization” will allow to **send various versions of one email campaign to your recipients**. You can consider this as “**hyper-segmentation**”. For example, you create a campaign about the promotion of your center, with raising brand awareness as an objective. Your center offers Karting and Lasergame. If you have marked these two types of clients in your database, you can display a certain kind of contents for the Karting clients and another for the Lasergame clients, within the same email. Another example, you organize an open endurance. Foresee a certain type of contents for people below a certain best lap time and another type for people above this best lap time. There is no limit in the dynamic personalization of your campaigns. Thanks to this technique, **you will incredibly increase the positive outcome of your campaigns!**

CONCLUSION

Our email marketing platform can handle all what has been explained in this guide. You just need to focus on your email marketing strategy if you want to reach good results. **By applying most of these techniques, you will certainly develop possibilities to better reach your customers** and to get them to open and “process” your emails.

Because we want our clients to set up successful email marketing campaigns, **you can always contact us for marketing advice**: promotion and event ideas, email marketing techniques, design assistance, etc.

Use our **iNet Silver package for automated trigger-based email marketing** (welcome email, birthday email, inactive customers targeting, reservation reminder, member card expiry warning, Facebook app reminder). **Our Mobile application uses a messaging system**, which can be used in combination to your email campaigns, or reserved for your customers who purchased the digital member card. And of course, **use your Facebook page** to communicate to your Fans.

I wish you the very best with your email marketing campaigns!

Benjamin Thébault
Marketing manager
SMS-Timing team