



## What should I consider when conducting user experience tests on e-mails?

Story posted: May 8, 2008 - 11:04 am EDT

User experience testing is a powerful e-mail optimization technique. Unlike multivariate and A/B testing, it tells you more than what users do with your e-mail. It tells you why they do it. But there are essential best practices to consider if you want to get the most out of testing. Here are a few.

- Begin testing by giving participants context. If the e-mail is triggered from a Web site, make sure participants first interact with that Web site. If the e-mail is one piece of a multipart series, show participants all preceding e-mails. If it's generated after users interact with print collateral, show participants that collateral. These measures will prevent you from being sidetracked by context-dependent problems that will resolve themselves in the real-world experience.

- During testing, use true-to-life viewing and interaction methods. If the e-mail will be viewed on a computer screen, test it there instead of on paper. Paper-based testing doesn't assess text tolerances and doesn't show how content can fall below the fold. Similarly, if users will interact with the e-mail on mobile devices, be sure to test it on these devices to understand interaction challenges—like those caused by scrolling and stylus pens. Also, be sure to test shorter e-mail exposures to understand the effect of time-limited viewing. Short-term user perceptions are often much different than long-term designer perceptions.

- After testing the e-mail, show participants what happens next to determine whether the larger system of communications makes sense. If the e-mail leads to a Web page when clicked, show participants that Web page. If a subsequent e-mail will follow after a delay, use a distracter task so that participants forget some of what they just saw and then show that e-mail. These measures will tell you whether the test e-mail needs modification to work within the larger communication context.

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