

For Immediate Release

Contact:

Jeanniey Mullen
Email Experience Council
973.204.0023
@emailexperience.org

Ali Swerdlow
Email Experience Council
212.790.1483
@emailexperience.org

EMAIL EXPERIENCE COUNCIL RELEASES RETAIL EMAIL SUBSCRIPTION BENCHMARK STUDY

Top Online Retailers Moving Toward Richer Opt-In Processes That Are More Transparent and Give Consumers More Choices

New York, NY, November 19, 2008 — The [Experience Council](#) (eec), the email marketing arm of the [Marketing Association](#) (DMA), today announced the release of its third annual “Retail Email Subscription Benchmark Study.” The new study examined the opt-in practices of 120 of the top online retailers tracked via the [Email Blog](#) and found that there is a clear trend toward richer subscription processes.

“This 39-page study dissects the subscription process and examines its various elements, giving email marketers an in-depth look at all of the issues to consider,” said Jeanniey Mullen, eec founder and chief marketing officer of Zinio and VIVMag. “Its findings should be extremely valuable to retailers, service companies, and other B-to-C companies who are looking for new ideas and benchmarks against which to measure their own opt-in practices.”

“The old adage applies here — you never have a second chance to make a good first impression,” said Dave Lewis, chief marketing officer of Message Systems, sponsor of the study. “Your opportunity is to convert a prospect’s initial interest into a long-term, brand loyal relationship. Your challenge is not to lose that interest (and the opportunity) with an intimidating or intrusive subscription process. That’s why we’re proud to sponsor this eec study on subscription best practices so marketers can make their first impression really count.”

Commenting on the eec study, DMA Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Ramesh Lakshmi-Ratan, Ph.D., said, “A new marketing paradigm has emerged — one in which the consumer is in control. In this environment — regardless of the marketing channel employed — the savvy marketer gives consumers the opportunity to express their preferences and then respects them, ensuring the relevancy of their messaging. The organizations that recognize and respond to consumers’ choices will find themselves the marketplace winners.”

“Retailers are gravitating away from one-click sign-ups and toward landing page forms that give would-be subscribers more information and options,” said Chad White, the eec’s director of retail insights, editor-at-large, and founder of the Retail Email Blog, and the study’s author. “Marketers that follow this approach and apply the preferences indicated should see lower opt-out rates over time. The age of one-size-fits-all email marketing is coming to an end.”

The new study, which is available in the eec’s [Room](#), also found that retailers are putting more focus on list hygiene. Thirty-eight percent of retailers ask subscribers to confirm their email

address by re-entering it, up from 27% last year. Also, 5% of retailers now use a confirmed (double) opt-in process, up from 3% last year, which improves list quality.

Here are some other findings from the Retail Email Subscription Benchmark Study:

- After falling from 27% in 2006 to 8% last year, the percentage of retailers using sign-up incentives rebounded to 13% this year, despite growing concerns about the quality of subscribers that are attracted by sweepstakes and other incentives.
- With recent evidence suggesting that putting privacy policies front and center during the subscription process actually reduce sign-ups, only 36% of retailers mentioned their privacy policy this year, down from 45% last year.
- Despite quicker subscription fulfillments overall, 29% of retailers took 15 days or longer to honor opt-ins or failed to honor them all together. That figure was the same as last year.

The new eec study can be purchased for \$249 by visiting the eec's Whitepaper Room by [here](#). Members of the eec may obtain the report at a discounted rate.

[Members of the press may request a free copy of the study by contacting Ali Swerdlow of the eec at 212.790.1483 or [@emailexperience.org](#).]

About the Email Experience Council (eec)

The Email Experience Council (eec) ([.emailexperience.org](#)), the Direct Marketing Association's vertical working group that is focused on the email marketing industry, is a global professional organization striving to enhance the image of email marketing and communications, while celebrating and advocating its importance in business, and its ROI value. The eec is committed to regularly conducting a broad series of email initiatives for a variety of organizations that highlight the positive impact and importance of email as a marketing tool, communications vehicle, and branding device. Additionally, eec members are setting the standards for email through Member Roundtables. The eec members are representatives of other trade organizations, agencies, advertisers, technology partners, clients, and companies focused on the potential of email marketing via mobile and other digital devices.

About Message Systems

Founded in 1997, Message Systems is a worldwide provider of email software solutions and services for email service providers (ESPs), Internet service providers (ISPs) and large enterprises that need to manage large volumes of business-critical email. Through a combination of technology, partnerships and intellectual capital, Message Systems offers a family of software solutions and services that address the email infrastructure and deliverability needs for organizations ranging from e-commerce companies to the Global 2000. With the most powerful message management platform on the market, Message Systems gets over a billion unique messages to the right place at the right time every day. Headquartered in Columbia, Maryland, Message Systems has a network of channel partners in North America, Europe and Asia. For more information, go to [.messagesystems.com](#) or call 877.887.3031.

About Direct Marketing Association (DMA)

The Direct Marketing Association ([.the-dma.org](#)) is the leading global trade association of businesses and nonprofit organizations using and supporting multichannel direct marketing tools and techniques. DMA advocates standards for responsible marketing, promotes relevance as the key to reaching consumers with desirable offers, and provides cutting-edge research, education, and networking opportunities to improve results throughout the end-to-end direct marketing process. Founded in 1917, DMA today

represents more than 3,400 companies from dozens of vertical industries in the US and 48 other nations, including half of the Fortune 100 companies, as well as nonprofit organizations.

In 2008, marketers — commercial and nonprofit — will spend \$176.9 billion on direct marketing, which accounts for 52.1 percent of all ad expenditures in the United States. Measured against total US sales, these advertising expenditures will generate approximately \$2.057 trillion in incremental sales. In 2008, direct marketing accounted for approximately 10 percent of total US gross domestic product. Also in 2008, there were 1.6 million direct marketing employees in the US. Their collective sales efforts directly support 9.3 million other jobs, accounting for a total of 10.9 million US jobs.

The Power of Direct: Relevance. Responsibility. Results.

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