



# Email Best Practices for Government

*Improving communication with the people who matter most*

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An eBook by Adobe Government SEA

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# Improving communication with the people who matter most

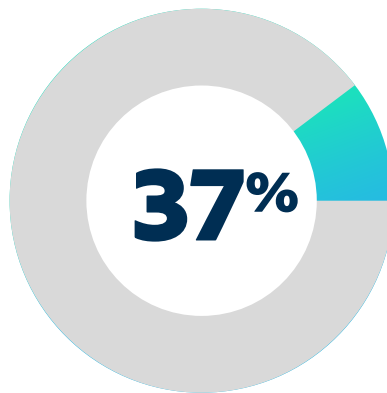
Email is a form of digital communication that permeates nearly every part of our day. It's often one of the first things we look at when we wake up and the last thing we check before going to bed.

Despite its importance to our lives, people have a love/hate relationship with email. Far too often, the emails we receive are devoid of useful or meaningful information. They also frequently lack functional design, which creates a poor user experience or can prevent accessibility for people with visual disabilities.

According to an Adobe Email Usage Survey, people spend up to five hours a day checking email. And yet, they consider only 37% of emails they receive useful.

**~5 hrs**

*People spend up to 5 hours  
a day checking email.*



*The amount of emails received  
that people consider useful.*

*We know email is  
an essential way to  
communicate with  
people, so how can  
government agencies  
effectively use this  
channel to improve  
service delivery?*

As public servants, the currency of digital communication has never been more valuable. According to a recent study, 80% of people expect the same or higher quality of digital services from their government as they do from private sector companies.

*While the relationship between people and their government is not the same as their relationship to businesses, their expectations for digital communication remain the same.*

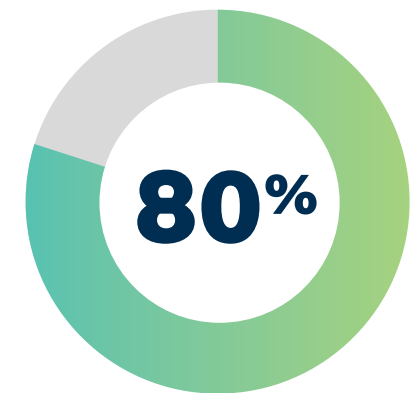
Agencies who modernise their email communications can help more people access more services, while serving the unique needs of many at scale, all in the name of delivering on their missions.

Public expectations are driving government agencies to modernise their email outreach and engagement.

Those agencies that do not adopt email best practices and a comprehensive strategy run the risk of burying their audience in an avalanche of impersonal mass messages. This will make digital communications less effective and cause agencies to miss opportunities to deliver more relevant and useful information to the people they serve.

So, how do you get started with modernising your email strategy?

*The roadmap to successful digital communication is grounded in understanding email's strategic role in creating unified and useful experiences for each person. These useful experiences drive missions forward by supporting the needs of the people.*



*of people expect the same or higher quality of digital services from their government as they do from private sector companies.<sup>1</sup>*

Here is where a data-driven approach becomes mission-critical, and success hinges on two key abilities.

First, agencies need to understand where each person is in their service journey.

Second, agencies must be able to apply this information to customise service delivery at each step.

These two factors alone have the power to transform the entire government-citizen relationship across every channel, opening up new possibilities.

Achieving this level of orchestration is made possible with advanced marketing automation, analytics, and campaign tools. By implementing these tools, agencies can help more people access more services and meaningfully engage with their agency or department.

***Inside this eBook, you'll learn how to:***

- Gather critical insights for effective email communication
- Swap "batch and blast" email tactics for customised interactions
- Improve communications across the citizen journey
- Connect communications with multi-channel outreach
- Shift from reactive, crisis-related outreach to proactive engagement

Digital communication knowledge is critical, but taking initiative is equally important. The time for change is now. Continue reading to improve your email communications and overall outreach and engagement strategy.

# Moving beyond “batch and blast” mass messages

It's no longer enough to push static information to citizens in mass—a practice which has been dubbed “batch and blast”. Batch and blast emails are more than just archaic—they can also have a negative impact on your relationship with your audience. Once a person deems your email communications impersonal and irrelevant, they may not give you another chance to gain their attention. The consequences of failing to get your message across? Fewer received alerts and notifications, and less services delivered to those who need them.

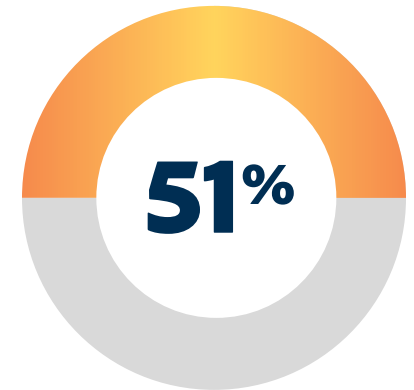
Private sector companies are constantly looking for ways to keep their messages at the top of customer inboxes. However, greater agility, fewer regulations and more funding have allowed private sector organisations to implement the tools and tactics needed to improve communication.

Despite having fewer resources and more requirements, public pressure for a more responsive government is starting to open the door for agencies to now use the same software and tactics as businesses. This allows government to deliver even more critical information through email and other channels.

**As businesses and people need government, the government also needs powerful allies with experience in advanced communications technologies and methods. Adobe is uniquely qualified to answer this call.**

Adobe's solutions are not just suitable for the public sector, they're uniquely positioned to fit the needs of government. Adobe provides foundational expertise that gives agencies across the country the confidence they need to move away from legacy platforms and generic strategies. Data-driven tactics make it possible for government agencies to cater to the needs of individuals at scale and ultimately help more people reach the services available to them.

**Recognising a need for change is an important preliminary step. But the true first step requires agencies to understand the journey each person takes to reach the services they need. Only by leveraging this information can government organisations create customised, omnichannel experiences that live up to 21st-century expectations.**



*QPAC's active subscribers after implementing Adobe tools.*

### ***Real-Time Success Story:***

*Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC) delivers over 1,300 performances a year—all with varying show lengths and venue sizes, often with pre-sale periods and staged seat releases. To drive ticket sales without saturating audiences with communications, the marketing function needs to run campaigns that are timely, co-ordinated, highly secure and relevant. Within 18 months of implementing Adobe Campaign, QPAC sent 24 million targeted emails. During that time, active subscribers—those clicking and engaging with content—increased from 43% to 51%.*

*“QPAC needed a simple way to manage campaigns across email, display, social and mobile. Adobe Campaign enables the creation of more sophisticated journeys, improving audience segmentation and communicating across multiple channels— all without the need for a developer.” Kim Harper, Digital Marketing Manager at QPAC.*

*QPAC is committed to protecting customer privacy and understands and appreciates that the privacy, confidentiality and security of any information provided is important to visitors and patrons. Adobe Campaign and Microsoft Dynamics 365 deliver a solution for segmentation and tailored communications while protecting patron and subscriber data.*

## Recognising your customer and their journey with your services

For government, the citizen journey is comprised of the steps that people take to access information and provided services. Understanding this journey is key to unlocking faster service delivery and lowering costs, because communication efforts will be focused on what matters. Greater efficiency is achieved by reaching the right person at the right time—online and offline.

Because modern people don't think in terms of channels, they tend to float from one channel to the next, often choosing whichever entry point is most convenient at the time. This means that, in order for agencies to provide a consistent experience, they need to make conversations across email, web, mobile, and offline channels feel like one seamless interaction.

*By mapping out the milestones of the citizen journey, agencies can predict what information citizens will need at every turn, thus mapping the most ideal path for citizens to follow in order to reach the information or services they need.*

Chances are, your agency has the data needed to map out your citizen journey from end to end. However, you need sufficient and connected marketing tools to aggregate and make sense of your data. Digital workflows and automation must also be employed in order to transform a multiple channel strategy into an all-channel one.



## Citizen journey mapping and email marketing. A two-step process.

### Step 1:

Refine your email communications based on data. Where and when are people receiving your emails? What messages have the most engagement? How often are people using your emails to access services? Email campaign analytics can help refine your communications to achieve better results.

### Step 2:

Identify target personas and their unique journeys. Email messages are most effective when you understand what your audience wants, so you can deliver a relevant message to them. To do this, you need to be able to build profiles or audience segments. A segment is a group of people with shared attributes that make them different from other groups.

For example, if the Department of Transportation was considering widening a road to include more lanes, an audience segment could be people who live within a five-mile radius of the change. This group can receive more detailed updates on upcoming meetings and decisions because the change impacts them more.

## Creating a single, seamless experience for every person

In the beginning, email platforms were created to serve one channel—email. Once digital multitasking began, a new type of email technology was necessary. Email's role became that of a gatekeeper, using a permission-based system to grant or deny access to an individual through their inbox.

*As the last defender of one-on-one communication, email holds a lot of power. It alone has the ability to act as a megaphone for your message, allowing your agency to cut through the noise and talk directly with your audience.*

Email also plays a key role in behaviour-based targeting, which is a marketing term for using predictive technology to recommend other services to people based on the service they have already accessed.

Behaviour-based targeting is a good example of how content can be customised with less effort than ever before. Agencies can automate relevant communication based on triggers such as email click-throughs, page visits, or session behaviour.

Say you want to increase the number of Affordable Care Act signups. You could send an email to those who had visited healthcare.org in the last 30 days but had not yet signed up. Trigger emails allow you to help people find what they're looking for and finish what they started.

Reframing your communication strategy around creating seamless, contextual conversations with the people you serve will yield higher engagement. Ultimately, it's a great means to connect more people to the right services and information they need.

*“Using technology in innovative ways is important. We used email marketing and an online calendar system. These tools allow us to reach our participants on platforms they interact with every day and allowed us to reach out to participants in a dynamic way.”*

— Lana Findlay, Health Information Specialist from the Live Well San Diego Support Team, in the Office of Strategy and Innovation, at the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency.

## Mapping your efforts to your agency's larger goals

Now that you understand the possibilities of email, it's important to consider how these tactics connect to your agency's larger goals. What results do you want to see from your communications?

While open rates, click-through rates, and conversions are standard measures, the real power lies in tying these actions to the desired outcome of your agency's mission. Your mission may be raising education funds from state lottery sales or recruiting foster care parents, and anything in between, so starting at those macro-level objectives will help you establish email goals that can directly impact your unique mission. Measuring what is meaningful to all levels of leadership at your agency will help you achieve cross-team collaboration. It will also give your team access to the data and free up time for more strategic thinking, while driving resource efficiency.

How will you measure your progress? Start by benchmarking where you are today at each phase of the communications process. List size. Open rates. Unsubscribe rates. Enrollment rates. Based on historical averages, decide on reasonable improvement goals within a six-month or one-year timeframe.

*How can you continually improve your results? Regularly analyse your progress to find patterns that are opportunities for improvements.*

When you get a higher than normal wave of new subscribers, dig deeper to find out why that happened. Was the information especially relevant? Did you send to a new segment? Get a cross-section of people to help interpret the results and decide how best to proceed for the greatest success.

***Start evaluating your measurement process.***

- Do you have a strong executive advocate with regular reporting touchpoints?
- Are you gaining visibility into the needs of your audiences to give insight to agency leadership about adjustments the agency can make?
- Can you show how omnichannel communications augment, shorten, speed, or support the higher cost channels of in-person or phone touchpoints?
- Do you have a way to incorporate feedback to continually improve?

*“During power outages, we work on communicating around the clock to keep our lines of communication open so that people know we’re on it and we’re working. We focus on proactive communication where people aren’t left wondering. They can be well-informed about what’s happening.”*

— Nicole Denton, Vehicles & Platforms Strategist - Digital Channel, Salt River Project

## Section Two

# Email. It's personal. Improving your email communications.

## Where are you now? Gauge your email maturity.

Email is one of the most cost-efficient and effective methods of communication. However, not all emails are created equal. From generic email blasts to timely, relevant communications, knowing where you stand on the spectrum of email maturity is a key first step to getting better results.

*Take this quick assessment below to find out where you can make the most improvement.*

In order to assess your maturity, circle the ranking that applies to you on a scale of one to four, with **one** as disagree and **four** as agree completely, then tally your totals for each section:

### Part 1: Strategy

*Having a defined email strategy, including executive team buy-in and clear communication plans for each stage of the citizen journey, is crucial for email program success.*

Our email audience sees value in our messaging and we consistently meet or beat our engagement targets.

1. Disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Somewhat agree
4. Agree completely

We have developed an email series for different stages of the citizen journey.

1. Disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Somewhat agree
4. Agree completely

Our email communications are connected to offline campaigns.

1. Disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Somewhat agree
4. Agree completely

We have clearly defined metrics and KPIs for evaluating the effectiveness and success of our email marketing program.

1. Disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Somewhat agree
4. Agree completely

Total for this section: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 2: Data

*Successful email programs use a variety of data points and profiles to gather insight into customer behaviour before, during, and after their first click.*

We have regularly updated, accurate citizen data.

1. Disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Somewhat agree
4. Agree completely

Citizen data from other systems is securely compiled into one singular location.

1. Disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Somewhat agree
4. Agree completely

We are able to segment, target, and test messaging for the people we serve in real time.

1. Disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Somewhat agree
4. Agree completely

We can track email opens, clicks, forwards, etc.

1. Disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Somewhat agree
4. Agree completely

Total for this section: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 3: Content

*Relevant content that is aligned with the citizen journey is key to effective email campaigns.*

We can easily create and manage email content with drag-and-drop design tools.

1. Disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Somewhat agree
4. Agree completely

We have a centralised repository of approved images and digital files to quickly find what we need.

1. Disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Somewhat agree
4. Agree completely

We are able to send dynamic emails that are customised and contextualised based on behaviour and engagement triggers.

1. Disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Somewhat agree
4. Agree completely

Total for this section: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 4: Delivery

*Being able to deliver emails to the inbox, in real time and in conjunction with other channels, is key to effective communication programs.*

We use workflows to automate next steps and identify segments.

1. Disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Somewhat agree
4. Agree completely

We send real-time, behaviour-triggered responses.

1. Disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Somewhat agree
4. Agree completely

We regularly use A/B testing to improve our results.

1. Disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Somewhat agree
4. Agree completely

We have a high email open and engagement rate.

1. Disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Somewhat agree
4. Agree completely

*Total for this section: \_\_\_\_\_*

*Add all section totals for **final score**: \_\_\_\_\_*

**Results:** Few organisations can score a perfect 60 points. When you look at those areas where you scored lower, you may notice a pattern that indicates how to improve your results. Only when you look at your strategy holistically can you take the needed steps to improve.



# Getting started: 5 things you can do today to improve

Whether you're new to cross-channel marketing or well versed in it, there are several things that you can do right now to kickstart better experiences. Below, you'll find five tips that can help you improve your citizen engagement from day one.

## Tip 1:

Create designs that click: Design helps people quickly connect with your content. The right verbiage is important, but a well-designed email is also accessible, tailored, and responsive. An asset library can help you correlate imagery to audience profiles, thus delivering more relatable (and clickable) content.

## Tip 2:

Always be optimising: Artificial intelligence (AI) is changing the way we work with data and automate tasks. Today, we can better determine the best times to send messages and automated recommendations to improve communication. With the help of Adobe Campaign, you can bring customer data from different systems, devices, and channels into a single source of truth. Then you can use artificial intelligence to speed up insights to take the right actions.

*How to start? Subject lines and preheaders are the perfect place. These two email features determine whether or not your message gets opened and read. An AI tool like Adobe Sensei can predict subject lines that will resonate best with your target audience even before you send your email.*

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### Tip 3:

Understand and cater to your audience: In the age of information overload, no one wants superfluous information or generic auto-replies. Citizens need trustworthy, meaningful connections at every step of their journey. This often means delivering information in bite-sized pieces without the use of jargon.

### Tip 4:

Ditch batch and blast: Thinking about sending another mass email? Before hitting the send button, ask yourself if the information you're providing is truly relevant to everyone on your send list. If not, consider which segments would be more appropriate for your message. When in doubt, a short survey is a considerate way to show your audience you value their opinions.

### Tip 5:

Connect the experience: Email often acts as an introduction. But the actual conversation continues in a variety of different channels, both online and off. An omnichannel approach guarantees a consistent message across these media, while tools like Adobe Campaign make orchestration and management easier with a single, easy-to-use interface.

*Delivering tailored content to a large population can be overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. With the right tools, you can provide one-to-one communications by setting rules and automating workflows. You can tap into the power of automation to set a series of actions in motion. This works especially well for agencies who depend on quick response times to meet citizen needs.*

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*HostelWorld used to struggle to send out 300 emails per year. Now, they send over a billion while maintaining a high click-through rate. "Even though we're sending out so many more emails, we're seeing lower unsubscribe rates and higher click-through rates. The difference is that we're using segmentation to target customers with only the deals and information that they'll find interesting."*

— Otto Rosenberger, CMO HostelWorld Group

### Pro Tip:

Brands that always include an A/B test in their emails generate an ROI of 48:1, compared to those that don't.

*After adopting a suite of Adobe solutions, the iconic Sydney Opera House saved about 1,000 hours of work per year on email campaigns — and the venue is enjoying its highest email open rate ever.*

## Bonus Tips

Here are a few additional checkpoints that can further advance your outreach and engagement efforts:

- **Make it easy to unsubscribe and change email preferences.** When you give people an opportunity to choose the frequency and topics of the messages they receive, your list size may decrease, but the engagement rate is likely to significantly improve.
- **Trust your own metrics.** Generic industry benchmarks are nice to set your gauge, but nothing is more accurate than targeting and testing your own audience segments. School closings, tax notifications, new programs for seniors – all reach different audiences with different habits and behaviours. Make sure your email system allows you to make those determinations.
- **Update your send list.** Dead end email addresses can give you an inflated read on your response rates. Keep your send list tidy and ensure it stays fresh and clean.
- **Plan ahead.** Scheduling out your email operations gives your agency more flexibility to coordinate with businesses, media, and other organisations.

# Technology built for communication

Evolving, without the right solutions, can seem impossible. That's why it's so important to invest in the right strategies, tools, and partnerships that can help you accomplish your mission.

*With help from Adobe, agencies can move beyond outdated communication strategies like batch and blast to cater to individual needs at scale.*

With citizen journey mapping, agencies can address the needs of the people they serve at every step and take an omnichannel approach to deliver useful experiences for all. Only then can we start to imagine what's possible today, tomorrow, and beyond.

At Adobe, we pride ourselves on creating technology that's built for communication. As the leader in cross-channel campaign experiences, we have everything you need to launch your next chapter of communication experiences.

# The tools that help you stay connected to the public

What your technology should do

*Don't let technology be the impediment to delivering better experiences to citizens. Your communication and campaign management solution should enable you to:*

- Create, manage, and deliver cross-channel communications from one solution.
- Aggregate and segment data to deliver relevant messages.
- Optimise communications at every stage of the service journey.
- Enforce branding consistency with centralised creative asset management.
- Streamline processes with behaviour-based automated workflows.
- Automate communications to deliver information quickly and accurately.
- Enhance citizen services with one-on-one tailored content.
- Use analytics to continually improve results.

**The benefits of these features to your agency include:**

- Proactive issue management to lower long-term costs.
- Increased citizen and employee satisfaction.
- Continuous improvement through meaningful metrics.
- More time for employees to focus on important tasks.
- Faster and more accurate service delivery with [Adobe Sensei](#).
- Easy adoption with [FedRAMP-certified cloud services](#).

# Adobe solutions for government

## Adobe Campaign & Analytics product overview

Only Adobe solutions for government allow you to tailor citizen experience and engagement on multiple channels, online and offline. Our Campaign Management tool allows you to track every interaction with a citizen to analyse, customise, and optimise their journey as they seek the service or information they need.



### Email

You can achieve truly engaging outreach by taking your email to the next level with customised messages and campaigns based on behaviour and timing.



### Citizen Journey

Get to know the citizen journey so you can reach the right person at the right time — through email, mobile, offline, and more.



### Campaigns

Synchronise all your communication efforts to give your audience a positive and fulfilling experience with your agency.

**Adobe named a Leader in [Gartner: Magic Quadrant for Multichannel Marketing Hubs](#) report.** Adobe was included for both its campaign management and automation capabilities. For the second consecutive year, Adobe was positioned furthest to the right for completeness of vision. And for the third consecutive year, Adobe and Marketo have both been positioned as Leaders.



<https://business.adobe.com/sea/solutions/industries/government.html>

1. Source: "Citizen Satisfaction with Digital Government Services Doubles in Two Years, Accenture Report Shows." Accenture. February 2017