

Survey Says: Consumers Prefer to Stay Connected with Businesses via Email

New Constant Contact research indicates Canadian small businesses are missing a valuable opportunity to reach customers and prospects

TORONTO & VANCOUVER, British Columbia--([BUSINESS WIRE](#))--As the one-year anniversary of Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL) draws near, new research from [Constant Contact®, Inc.](#) (NASDAQ: CTCT) underscores the continued importance of email marketing to both small businesses and the consumers they serve. Contrary to popular belief, Canadian consumers rate email as their number one method for staying in touch with businesses...and by a long shot. Sixty-eight per cent prefer email compared to just 12 per cent who prefer staying in touch via telephone, 8 per cent via mail, 7 per cent via in person conversations, and 5 per cent via social media. The issue? Not all Canadian small businesses are maximizing their email marketing efforts and almost 40 per cent aren't taking advantage at all.

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“Canadian consumers are saying loud and clear that they want to stay in touch with businesses, and that they want to do so through email,” said Lisa Kember, regional director for Canada East at Constant Contact. “This is major validation for the businesses that are already leveraging email marketing and a wake-up call for those that have yet to get started. When it comes down to it, email marketing is really the only channel where businesses own the relationship with their contacts. With email, unlike social, you are guaranteed to get your message directly in front of your audience—in their inbox.”

Small Business Email Marketing: Room for Improvement

The research shows that while the majority of small businesses (63 per cent) use email to stay in touch, 61 per cent of them use mailbox providers like Gmail™ and Outlook®, rather than an email marketing service provider, to do so. That's a problem, because those mailbox providers offer no way to maintain CASL compliance, through features like permission tracking, CASL-compliant email list signup forms, and unsubscribe functionality. Nor do they maximize marketing efforts through mobile-responsive templates, list growth tools, and results tracking.

“The good news here is that small businesses are reaching consumers where they want to be reached. That said, like any marketing effort, you need data to know if what you are doing is working. Are people opening your emails and clicking on your links? Who is subscribing and unsubscribing? Mailbox providers like Gmail and Outlook aren't designed to do that,” said Guy Steeves, regional director for Canada West at Constant Contact. “Perhaps even more importantly, there is a higher bar for any business using email marketing today, making it more important than ever that they take advantage of the email technology that's been designed to keep them on the right side of CASL compliance.”

Then there's the 37 per cent who aren't using email at all. Only 19 per cent of those are considering adding email to their marketing mix this year, a clear missed opportunity in light of the survey results.

Consumers: Hanging Out in the Inbox

Not only do Canadian consumers prefer to stay in touch with businesses via email, they also spend a whole lot of time in their email inbox – to the tune of 1.2 hours a day. Eighty-four per cent check their email at least twice per day, with 38 per cent of those checking six or more times. That's a lot of missed opportunities for those small businesses not using email marketing.

Why do consumers choose to subscribe to a business's email list? Their top reasons are:

- Receive discounts and special offers (71 per cent)
- Take part in specific promotions (38 per cent)
- Stay informed on an ongoing basis (36 per cent)

Sixty-six per cent are equally likely to sign up for email marketing correspondence from national and local businesses.

CASL Has Minimal Impact

Survey results indicate that much has remained unchanged in a post-CASL world, despite the hype leading up to the start of enforcement in July 2014. Most small businesses (70 per cent) have continued to use email marketing as they had always done, and some have even increased their efforts (9 per cent) or started email marketing for the first time (6 per cent). Only 13 per cent have decreased their email marketing activity and just 2 per cent have stopped altogether.

List size has remained mostly consistent with a pre-CASL world. Sixty-five per cent of small businesses' mailing lists have stayed the same post-CASL, while 25 per cent have decreased list size and 10 per cent have increased list size. CASL has also had minimal impact on business metrics for individual small businesses, who stated that the effect on customers, prospects, profitability, gross revenue, and overall success largely remained unchanged.

"CASL is rooted in the best practice of permission-based marketing, so it's not shocking that small businesses have not seen an adverse impact on business," said Kember. "While some modifications may have been necessary initially, it seems that one year out, the impact has been much less than previously feared and the value of email marketing remains stronger than ever."

To learn more about Constant Contact or start a free trial, [click here](#).

About the Data

This data was compiled from two Constant Contact-sponsored surveys, deployed to a Research Now panel of 501 Canadian small businesses and 502 Canadian consumers in April 2015. These surveys are part of an [ongoing series](#) addressing the impact of CASL for small businesses across Canada.

About Constant Contact®, Inc.

Constant Contact introduced the first email marketing tool for small businesses, nonprofits, and associations in 1998. Today, the company helps more than 600,000 customers worldwide find marketing success through the only all-in-one online marketing platform for small organizations. Anchored by our world-class email marketing tool, Constant Contact helps small businesses drive repeat business and find new customers. It features multi-channel marketing campaigns (newsletters/announcements, offers/promotions, online listings, events/registration, and feedback) combined with shared content, contacts, and reporting; free award-winning coaching and product support; and integrations with critical business tools – all from a single login. The company's extensive network of educators, consultants/resellers, technology providers, franchises, and national associations offer further support to help small organizations succeed and grow. Through its Innovation Loft, Constant Contact is fueling the next generation of small business technology.

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