



Email Promos

(an excerpt from my upcoming marketing book--due out very soon!)

In the past few years, email promos have become much more popular. Now they go hand in hand with print mailers as one of the most popular forms of active marketing for photographers. In fact, integrated with print promos and other efforts, e-promos can be one of your best marketing tools.

And yet, many photographers still aren't using this tool. In a recent small survey I did of photographers, almost 20% were not sending e-promos as a part of their marketing plan. When I've spoken with photographers, the most popular reason I hear for not sending e-promos is, "Buyers hate them!" closely followed by, "They don't work, anyway." There always seems to be some photographer on a photo forum who rails about how e-promos are terrible and a waste of time.

But the reality is that these statements are not factually accurate. In a recent anonymous survey of buyers (of all kinds--editorial, advertising, corporate), the rates of those who dislike e-promos were significantly lower (24%) than they were in previous surveys (35-45%) and they're starting to approach the opinions on postcard mailers (upper teens)¹. In fact, more and more buyers (75%) are now saying they have neutral or better feelings about them. That clearly means that they must be working, too.

So, with 75% of buyers neutral-to-positive, if you aren't sending e-promos, you might want to reconsider.

What makes a good e-promo?

As you've already read several times in this book, the most important factor in any tool is the image you use in/on it and this holds true for your e-promos, too. In that same buyer survey I just mentioned, buyers themselves ranked image quality (that is, artistic quality) number one, by leaps and bounds (79%). On the other side of this issue, they said that a poor image would overwhelmingly keep them from clicking through to the photographer's website (90%).

Also, as mentioned in the previous chapter, remember to think "campaign," not individual e-promos. When your e-promos have a consistent concept as well as branding, their long-term impact will be better. You can make your selections very much like you did for your print mailers. In fact, you could (should) combine the two tools into one conceptually cohesive campaign.

Another option, if you want, is to make your e-promos like little press releases and thus show images from a project you recently completed and wish to promote. You can do this in some of

¹ Interestingly, in the most recent survey no one said they hated e-promos, but 1% said they hated postcard mailers.

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the emails and stick to a consistent concept for the others, too. For example, if you are sending 9 emails over a year, send 2 on-concept then one PR-type then 2 more on-concept then the next, PR-type, etc.

Size Matters...Again

The second most important factor in a successful e-promo, according to the buyers, was limiting the number of images and, therefore, the size of the email. This is a very important consideration. Generally, the most successful e-promos display only one image. That image should be optimized for this use and kept as small as possible in its file size. For a buyer, there is little worse than having their email (and thus their workflow) all screwed up because someone sent a huge file². Buyers have told me they have at times received emails with 10+MB image files! Ouch!

While photographers will of course be worried about the technical quality of a smaller file, remember that these images will only be seen in the targets' email and on their computer or mobile device. Any loss of quality will be negligible at those resolutions.

These size limitations also mean that embedding audio³ or video in your promos is not a good idea. While more photographers are creating videos (whether slideshows or full video), which is a great idea, rather than sending them as a part of a promo it is better to post them on your website and also, possibly, on YouTube and to send the link as a part of your e-promo.

One more size-related issue: window size. Most people use the preview pane of their email application to read their emails. If your email is larger than the usual preview window size, parts of the e-promo will get cut off and require scrolling. Scrolling to see an image is always a bad thing. While you want a nice, large image in your e-promo, too large is worse than too small.

² "Huge" is, of course, relative, as is small. Generally speaking, try to keep the entire promo under 500Kb. Smaller is better.

³ Please remember that if you use audio, you must get the rights to the piece you use. Music is protected just as your images are, even classical pieces.

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