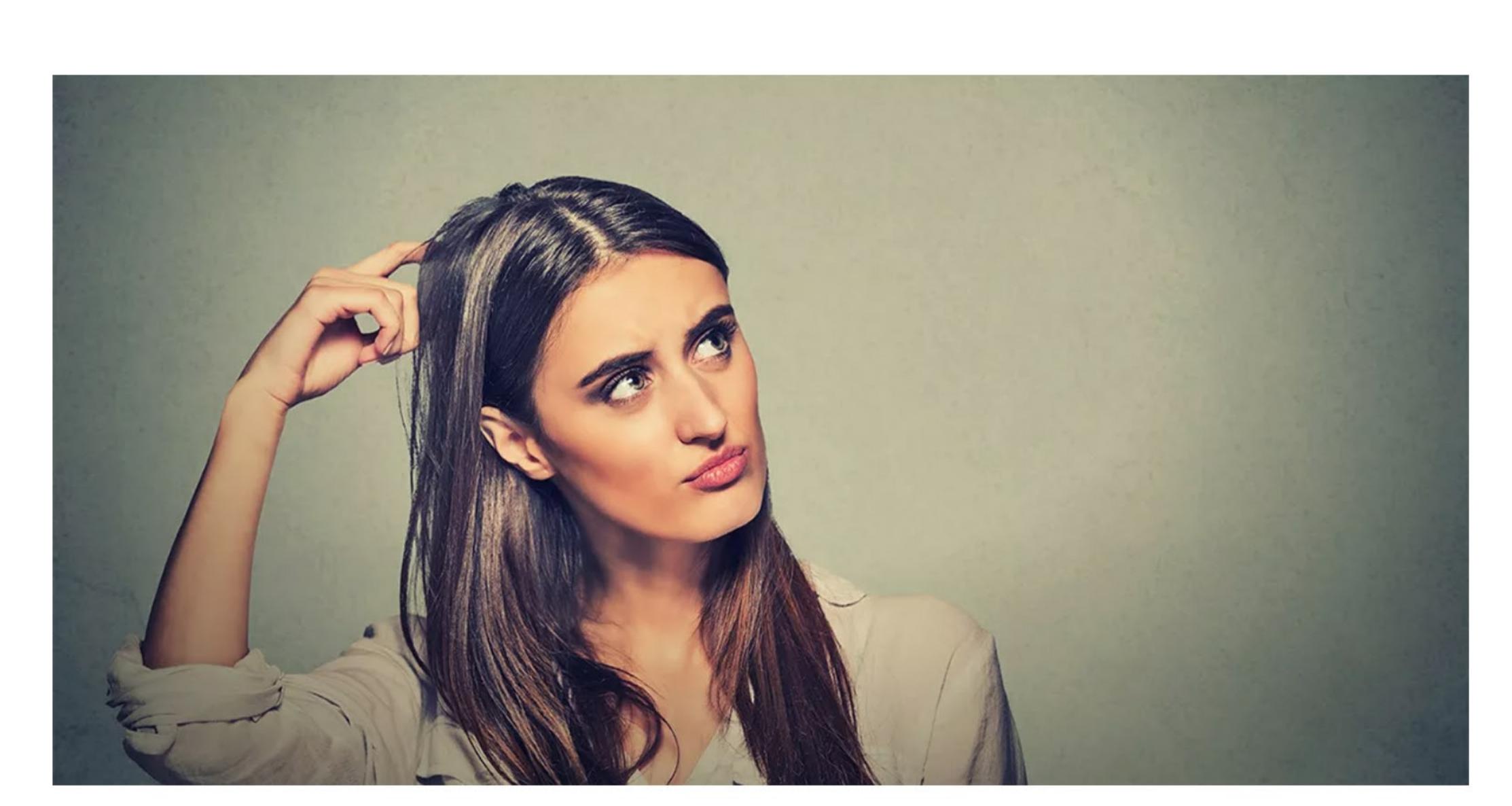# 5 Ways to Put Your Email to the Test

Getting the most member engagement with your email campaigns may feel like a guessing game with no concrete answers.  The reality is that members' preferences are constantly changing, competition for their attention is intense, and what worked in the past may be less effective today.  While there may not be a single all-encompassing answer to why a member opens one email but not another, association communicators can improve conversions with some proven A/B testing strategies.



## What is A/B Testing?

A/B testing is a fast and reliable way to test variations of your messages to maximize member engagement and drive higher open/click rates. Here's how it works:

1. Send one version of your email to a subset (e.g. 10%) of your audience.
2. Send Version B to another 10% of your list.
3. After a predetermined period (usually two hours), the version with the best performance automatically is sent to the remainder of your list.

Using marketing automation, you even can test multiple variations of a message. For instance, you can opt to simply test two subject lines; or get more creative and test the subject lines along with testing two images, or two calls to action, or another variable – the combinations are up to you.

> *Using marketing automation, you even can test multiple variations of a message*

## What Should You Test?

Automated A/B testing is perhaps best known for testing email subject lines, but it can be applied to numerous other variables of the email. Consider testing these as you refine your outbound campaigns, and monitor the results to see where you achieve the greatest gains:

1. **Subject Lines**. Customizing subject lines with first names can be effective, if you use the strategy judiciously. Try different combinations of words such as, for instance, "New White Paper: Download Now" versus "Learn A/B Testing Tips: White Paper."
2. **Calls to Action**. Test where to place your calls to action, how many to use and the most effective formatting. Does a button CTA generate higher clicks than the words "Read More"? Does an email with three CTAs encourage greater click throughs than one with a single button?
3. **Timing.** The best day and time to send emails varies based on the industry your association serves. Conventional wisdom holds that Mondays and Fridays are not good email days, but your association members may prove that to be urban legend! Your members may be more likely to open mail when they first arrive at work – or over lunch. One association found that email on "light holidays" like Memorial Day generated a surprising uptick in open rates, presumably because recipients have down time to read non-urgent mail. The only way to know your audience is to test it.
4. **Sent From Alias.** One healthcare association achieved significantly higher open rates when emails were sent from its CEO, a highly respected physician and association leader. Another association generated more clicks by changing the sender from the name of its newsletter, to the advocacy vice president.
5. **Design.** Don't think you have to always design fancy graphical headers and layouts. Put graphic layouts up against basic text-only emails. You may be surprised that a straightforward text email can garner more attention than a beautifully designed layout that required hours of your time.

> ✔ *Subject Lines*
> ✔ *Calls to Action*
> ✔ *Timing*
> ✔ *Sent From Alias*
> ✔ *Design*

Ready to put your email to the test? Start simple. Set goals for your email campaign, and begin by test one thing at a time. Marketing automation makes setup and monitoring easy.