

Email Marketing

Benchmark Guide 2007

233 Charts & Tables
8 Eyetracking Heatmaps

Note: This is an authorized excerpt from the full 325-page Email Marketing Benchmark Guide. To download the entire Guide, go to: <http://www.SherpaStore.com> or call 877-895-1717

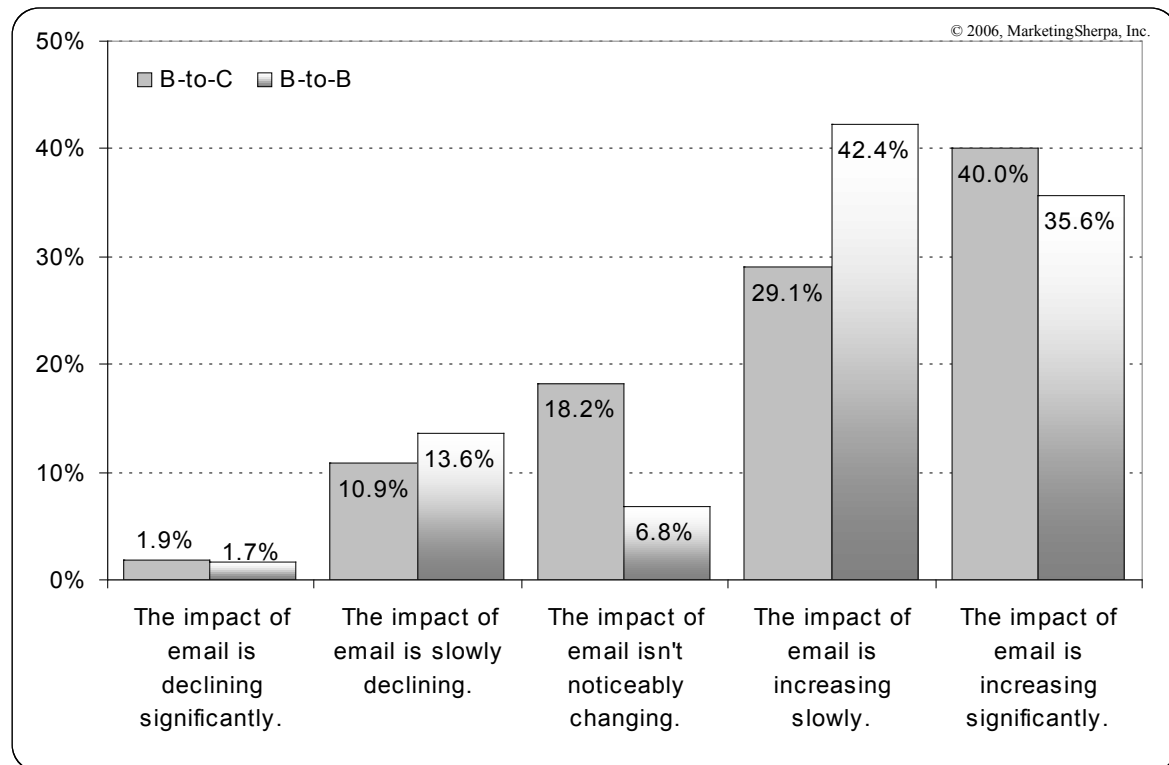
Executive Summary:

6 Key Email Marketing Alerts for 2007

Before you dive into the 233 charts and tables, 21 images, eight new eyetracking heatmaps included in MarketingSherpa's Email Marketing Benchmark Guide 2007 Edition, here is our quick overview of a few of the most important (and sometimes surprising) lessons learned.

Alert #1. Email Performs Consistently (Despite the Hype)

Chart: The Changing Value of Email Marketing



Source: MarketingSherpa, Email Marketing Benchmark Survey, November 2006

Methodology: This fifth annual survey was opened to selected MarketingSherpa reader lists on Oct. 26 and closed on Nov. 1, 2006. 3,637 total responses were collected from email marketers (2,492) and employees at agencies/ESPs working with email (1,145).

Ever since 2002, MarketingSherpa's research team have noticed a hype-related trend. Whenever hype-makers try to build up excitement about a new marketing tactic, they knock email. Frequently, their speeches, articles and white papers begin with phrases, such as, "Now that email doesn't work anymore, you should turn instead to ..."

We've seen this tactic used to promote blogging, RSS feeds, desktop applications, mobile marketing and, most recently, podcasting. Here, at MarketingSherpa, we're not against

new marketing tactics – in fact, we champion their use via practical research and Case Studies. However, we would never be so foolish as to say that (a) email is in any kind of serious trouble; (b) email should be replaced by a different channel; or, (c) the reason to test a new channel is to replace email.



The reason to test a new channel is to continually expand the effectiveness of your marketing tactics. In the 1950s, people didn't test TV ads because radio ads were "dying." Today, broadcast ads in both mediums are alive and well.

As the previous chart indicates, marketers in the trenches agree that email is also alive and well. And, for some, it's even improving.

Look further in this Guide for many more charts on precisely which types of email marketing are doing the best and how the above perceived marketing value of email is being translated into actual 2007 marketing budget changes.

Alert #2. Small Opt-In Form Design Changes Have Big Impact

Table: Single Column Forms vs. Double Columns

	Result: Loser
	Result: Winner

Source: Optimost for MarketingSherpa, November 2006

Methodology: Using multivariable testing, Optimost examined email subscription landing pages looking for significant variations in performance related to specific variables.

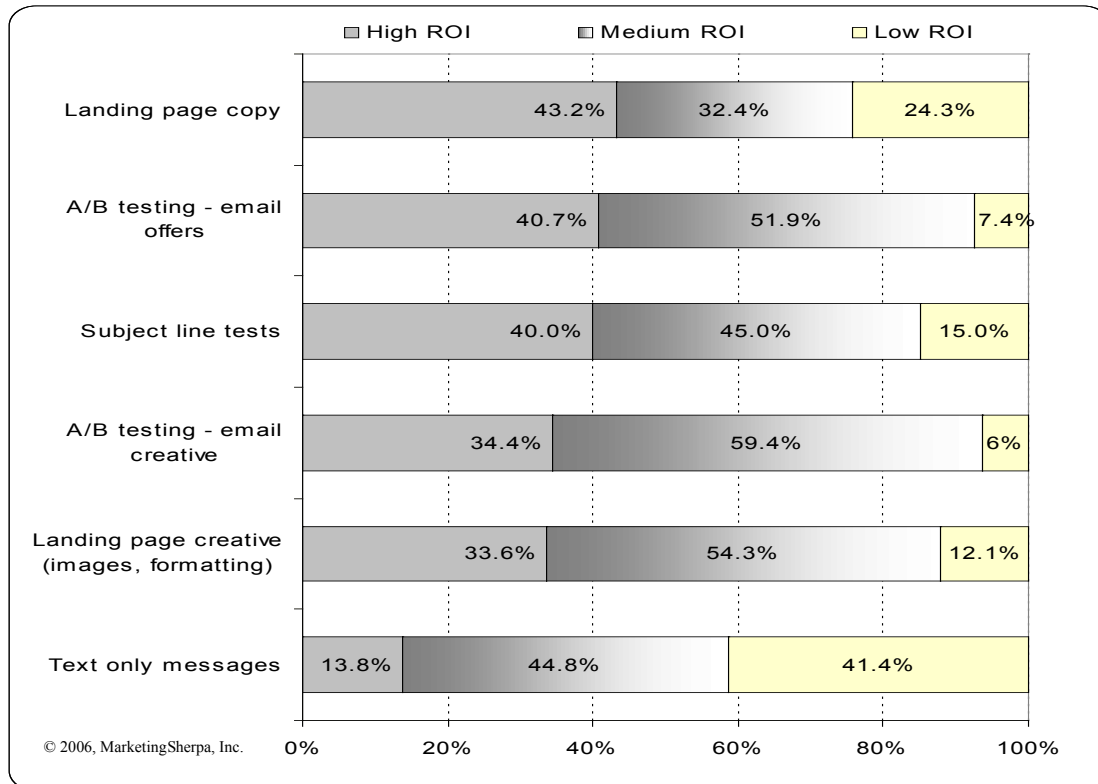
Many marketers we've spoken to over the past year have begun testing opt-in form tweaks. Previously the territory of the IT or Web department, now mainstream marketing designers are investing in form tests. The creative aspect might not seem as exciting as a newsletter or sales alert design ... your results can impact the overall success of your email program far more profoundly.

It's obvious. If you can improve opt-in conversions on your Web site by 25% to 40% (a not uncommon result of design tests), your list will grow significantly. Plus, those new names produce your highest email campaign response rates.

That's why as part of this year's Email Marketing Benchmark Guide, in addition to updated charts tracking list growth patterns for B-to-B and B-to-C marketers, we partnered with Omniture to create a study of what works for opt-in forms based on dozens of their multivariate tests across multiple clients. The results include the image above, clearly showing one-column forms outperform two.

Alert #3. Landing Page Tests Give the Best ROI

Chart: Email Tests – B-to-C Marketers Evaluate ROI



Source: MarketingSherpa, Email Marketing Benchmark Survey, November 2006

Methodology: This fifth annual survey was opened to selected MarketingSherpa reader lists on Oct. 26 and closed on Nov. 1, 2006. 3,637 total responses were collected from email marketers (2,492) and employees at agencies/ESPs working with email (1,145).

If you're having a hard time getting a budget for the personnel or technology you need to conduct tests, this chart may prove helpful in your battles. Too often, senior management are prone to regarding email as something that's nearly "free and easy" instead of as a marketing tactic you should invest in for improvements.

Your copywriting team will love these results – the top three best ROI tests were more to do with words (copy, offer, subject line) than with design or with graphics.

Your Web design team (or IT department) and Web analytics departments also have to be put on notice. As this chart proves, the landing page (where clicks land) is critical. This means that your email analytics are not complete at just open and click, you have to include Web data after the click. It also means that the email department has to have a heavy hand in the Web design team's ongoing tests and decisions. Email can no longer be an isolated department down the hall.

Alert #4. Eyetracking Results – People Click Where Your Designers Don't Expect

Eyetracking Test: Original Ecommerce Offer & Results Heatmap



Source: MarketingSherpa and Eyetools Inc., November 2006

Although many marketers now use eyetracking technology to evaluate Web pages, few (with the notable exception of Nokia) routinely invest in eyetracking for their email newsletters and sales alerts.

For the second year in a row, MarketingSherpa continued, with the help of research partner Eyetools Inc, to conduct tests on design elements familiar to many marketers' campaigns.

We tested bolding vs not bolding copy. We tested placement of offer headline. We tested newsletters with and without a table of contents at the top. And, as you can see above, we tested consumer reactions to ecommerce sales alerts.

Key – when we tested all of these, none of the links was clickable. So the little ‘hand’ did not appear on any of the users’ mouse icon indicating ‘clickability’ when he or she scrolled over a link. However, in every single case, the tested emails received clicks.

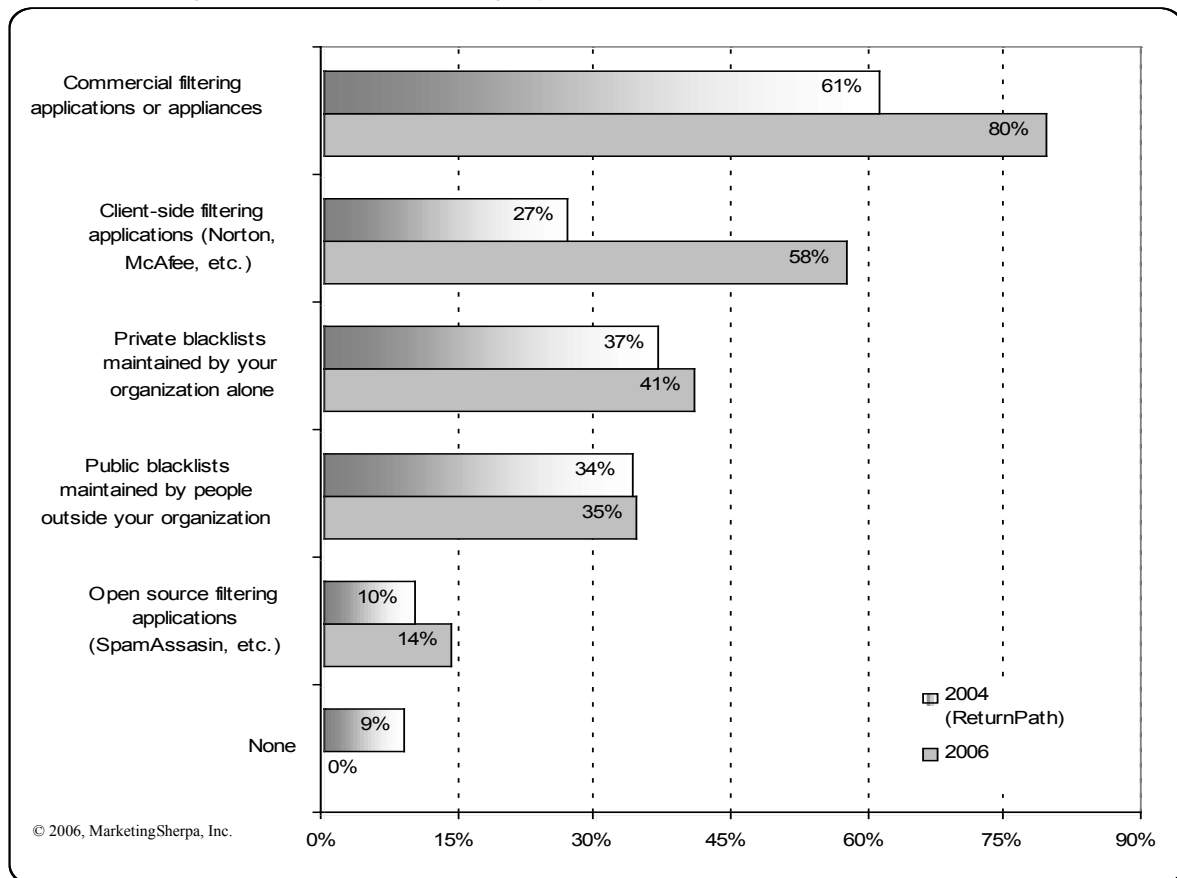
And, in every case, some of those clicks were on parts of the email that would never have been clickable even if the links were live.

In other words, when people click on your email, they don’t always carefully figure out where the clickable link is. They just bang away at their mice. As with the Web pages we’ve tested, some of the most popular ‘non-clickable’ clicks are on images, including product hero shots, logos and, here anyway, the happy hiking models.

How should this affect your design? Unfortunately, if you make the entire email clickable, your campaign will be stopped as spam by some filters. So, if you plan on that, be sure to invest in services, such as Goodmail, Habeas, Return Path and/or Pivotal Veracity, which can help permission mailers get past filters sometimes despite their design.

Alert #5. Corporations Continue to Filter Permission Email By Mistake

Chart: How Corporations With 500+ Employees Filter Email



Source: MarketingSherpa and KnowledgeStorm, Behind the Firewall: B-to-B Email, November 2006 and ReturnPath, Corporate Spam Filter Monitor Industry Study, July 2004.

Methodology: The survey was fielded on Nov. 1, 2006, to KnowledgeStorm readers from companies with more than 500 employees. It was closed Nov. 7 with 513 responses, including 136 from IS/IT professionals responsible for the anti-spam efforts of their organizations.

Blech! We're hugely in favor of filtering unwanted spam. Filters can save work hours for more productive work and ensure the 'wanted' permission email in the in-box gets the attention it deserves instead of being lost in a sea of spam.

The problem is, as we've reported for the past three years, email that people want to receive at work is mistakenly filtered up to 40% of the time. Businesses have a far higher false positive rate than ISPs do. Permission email that gets through to Hotmail, AOL and Yahoo users (among others) will not always get through corporate filters.

The chart above shows why. Public blacklists, private blacklists and open-source filtering applications such as SpamAssassin are built in such a way that false positives are easy.

Their primary goal is to stop the maximum amount of spam, even if that means junking a bunch of wanted email along the way. So, they filter based on words (should the word "breast" always be filtered? What if the message is about breast cancer for scientists?) Or, they may filter based on what an IT department staffer thinks is spam (should any email with HTML images be stopped? Should all email with attachments be stopped? Should emails with more than one hotlink be stopped? How about email that has the word "Unsubscribe" or "Free"?)

Or, they may filter based on the sender's IP address. This means that any mailer unlucky enough to share an IP address with a separate company, whom an IT guy somewhere considered a spammer, is also going to be stopped because of misidentification. This problem is a particular concern for smaller B-to-B mailers who often do not invest in a separate IP address. (Many don't even know it's possible.)

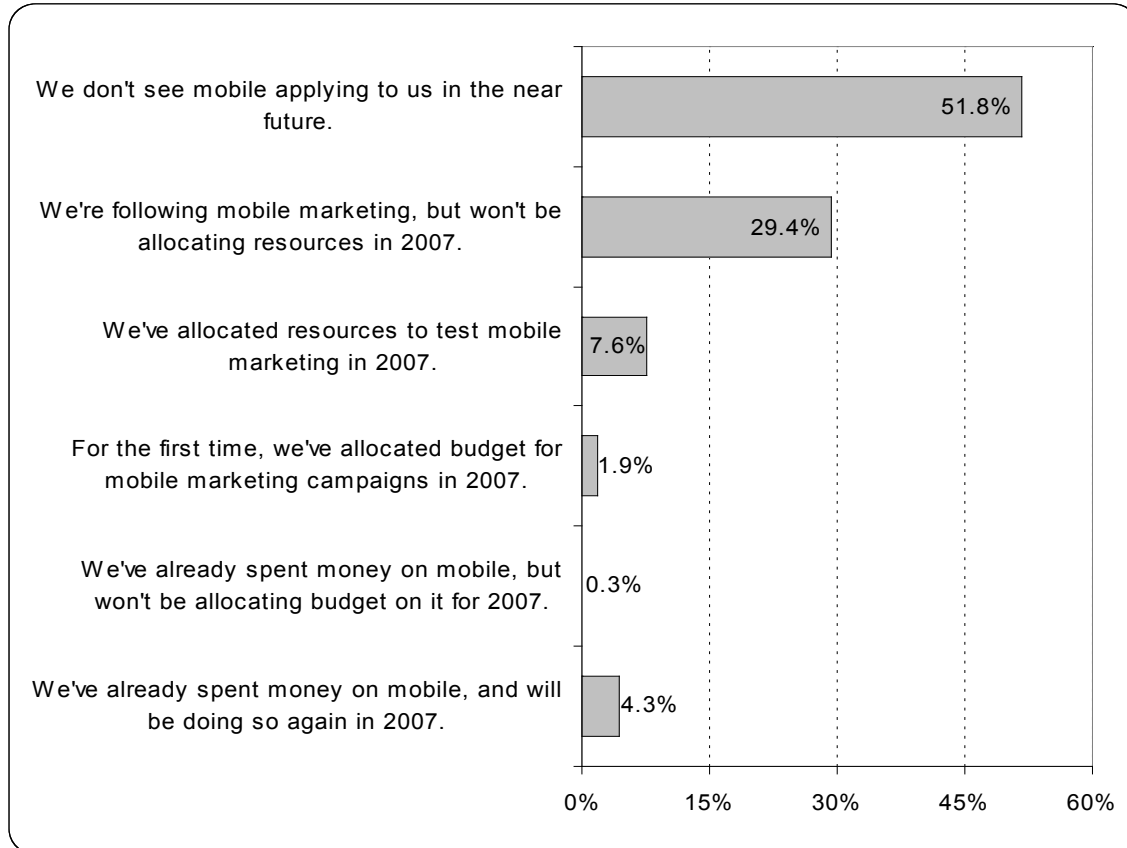
If you're interested in more data on how business users respond to email, continue reading this Guide. We've got more data than anyone in the world on this topic!

For years now, the US mobile marketing has been more of a promise than a reality, but we're finally seeing some movement, at least for consumer-focused marketers. 49.2% of the marketers we polled say they are at least following mobile as a potential tactic.

Consumer marketers also have crossed the so-called 10% "chasm" for adopting new tactics: 13.8% told MarketingSherpa that they will definitely conduct full-out mobile campaigns or campaign tests in 2007. And, mobile marketing isn't just for entertainment brands such as "American Idol" anymore. Traditional offline-focused brands such as Pop-eyes™ are testing mobile campaigns to distribute in-store discount coupons.

Alert #6. Mobile Marketing – Reality Approaches

Chart: Mobile Marketing 2007 Plans for US B-to-C Marketers



Source: MarketingSherpa, Email Marketing Benchmark Survey, November 2006

Methodology: This fifth annual survey was opened to selected MarketingSherpa reader lists on Oct. 26 and closed on Nov. 1, 2006. 3,637 total responses were collected from email marketers (2,492) and employees at agencies/ESPs working with email (1,145).

Although the overwhelming majority of B-to-B marketers told us that they do not consider mobile marketing a worthwhile investment for 2007, many have revealed individual concerns about corporate America's use of BlackBerrys and other wireless devices to read email. More and more, business email is not read on the PC – mobile may be a bigger headache for B-to-B marketers than they currently suspect.

Last but not least, many Web design departments have yet to begin to comprehend the problems that mobile devices pose for incoming traffic. Have you clicked to your Web site from a mobile device recently? How bad was the experience? Chances are, it was pretty awful.

We'll continue to track mobile in the years to come and bring you Case Studies in our regular newsletters. In the meantime, perhaps 2007 is the year to get all your email best practices ducks in a row ... from triggered autoresponders to appropriate segmentation. Because your department is sure to have new challenges in 2008. ■

Letter from the Editor

Five years ago, we launched this annual Benchmark Guide to bring the working marketer all the practical data he or she needs for budgeting, design, and tactical decisions.

This 2007 edition has been 100% re-researched and re-written from stem to stern. Inside you'll find 233 charts and tables, 21 illustrative images, eight brand new eyetracking heatmaps, plus handy glossaries for email, RSS and mobile marketing terms. It's truly a compendium of everything you need at your fingertips.

In fact, this Guide is not just one solitary study, but contains the results of literally dozens of research studies. Most importantly:

#1. MarketingSherpa's Annual Email Marketer Survey - Real-life Marketer Data

3,637 email marketers responded to our tough questions about their open, click, and conversion rates. They also revealed what tests worked best, what's not working, list growth, and how email budgets are changing for 2007.

This is without a doubt the **largest** study even conducted across the email marketing professional universe. Which is handy, because we had more than enough response data to slice out statistically valid data by marketer categories including B-to-B, ecommerce, and mass consumer emailers.

Plus, you'll find plenty of useful year-over-year trend data because we've been conducting this study for five years now.

#2. Email Design Eyetracking Study - Year Two

You'll find eight full-color heatmaps from MarketingSherpa's newest Eyetracking Study conducted in partnership with Eyetools Inc. Be sure to show these to your design team and/or agency so they understand how to revamp or tweak your creative for greater readability, longer involvement time per message, and higher clickthrough rates.

This year's study focused on three particular questions copywriters and designers often ask us about email:

- Which email newsletter design gets more reading and clicks? Does adding a brief table of contents near the top help?
- How can you get more business executives to download a white paper from an emailed offer?

#3. How to Improve Opt-In Forms: Multivariable Study

If you want to grow your email list by getting more Web visitors to opt-in, you'll find this data extremely useful. MarketingSherpa partnered with multivariate testing specialists Optimost to discover what factors affect conversion rates for opt-in forms.

You'll want to share this data with your copy and Web design team immediately so they can tweak your opt-in form for greater conversion rates. Factors reviewed include:

- Copywriting changes for subscription offers
- Presence of Privacy, No Spam, and service agreement information
- Single column forms vs double column forms
- Adding a yellow background to required form fields

#4. Email Filters & Blacklists in Corporate America -- B-to-B Email Deliverability

It's the dirty secret of B-to-B marketing. Due to corporate spam filters mistakenly stopping permission email, 40% or more of your email may be filtered before it reaches the in-box. That's roughly twice the false positive rate (aka filter mistake rate) of emails sent to at-home addresses.

In November 2006, MarketingSherpa partnered with KnowledgeStorm to survey executives at companies with more than 500 employees. We asked their IT departments how spam filtering is changing (or not) to help the good email get through. We also asked email recipients themselves if they were able to whitelist senders, how often they dug through their junk folder looking for mis-routed messages, and if they signed up for newsletters frequently.

The results are must-read information for every B-to-B marketer. Plus, we heartily encourage you to share this powerful information with your ESP and your own IT department to help improve business email delivery -- and everyone's campaigns.

#5. More Special Reports: List Growth, Creative Design, & Mobile Marketing

Do you want to know how advanced segmentation and personalization affects response rates? You'll find it here. How US marketers are approaching mobile/SMS marketing? Just keep reading. What are the best ways to grow a list are? See inside.

Plus, we also include the latest data on design and rendering, as well as data on what email recipients ranging from busy moms to business execs think about the email you're sending them. Use this information to guide your creative team.

Our research team is extremely interested in your input. After all, at the end of the day you're really their boss. Please contact us if you have a question about anything in this Guide or if you have ideas for data you'd like us to research for next year's edition. Best way -- email to Feedback@MarketingSherpa.com. Yes, live human beings reply to that email address every business day!

Sincerely,



Tad Clarke
Editorial Director

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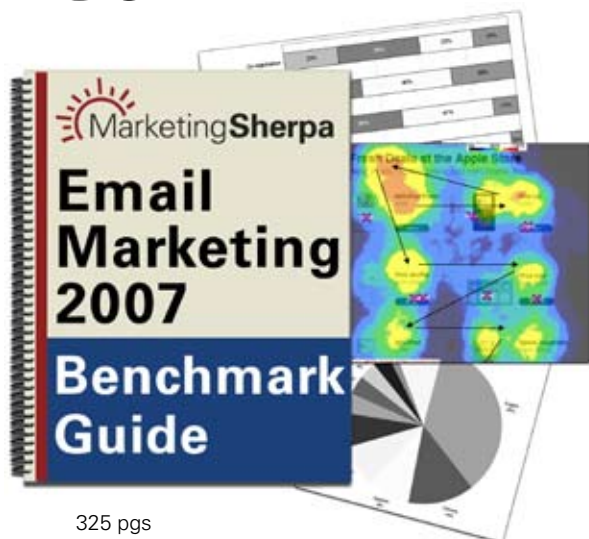
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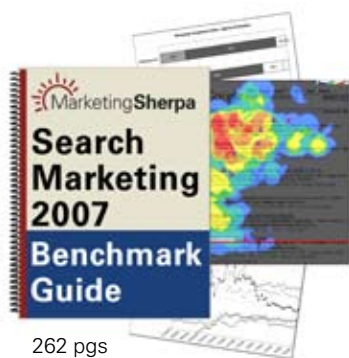
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