SEGMENTING **YOUR** SUBSCRIBERS

AWeber

Segmenting Your Subscriber List

Email marketing makes it easy to send messages to an entire group of people at the same time. That group, your subscriber list, is made up of people who have similar interests.

After all, that's why people sign up to receive your emails. They're intrigued by the info that you're going to send them, so they fork over their email addresses and wait to hear from you.

Eventually, however, your subscribers will form opinions of your emails. They may favor one feature over another, and stop actively interacting with your campaign.

That's when segmentation comes in handy. Segmentation gives you the ability to break down your subscriber list into subsets of people who show interest in specific topics without agitating subscribers who have no interest in them.

Once you section off your list into subsets, you can send certain emails *only* to the groups of people who share a similar quality, which eliminates those messages that subscribers don't care about.

There are lots of ways that you can segment your subscribers. Any information that you request from people at sign-up can be used to segment your list later on. Here are some of the most frequently used segmenting methods.

Segmenting *Who* Clicked a Certain Link In a Specific Email

Knowing who clicks on particular links in your message can help you get a better idea of the interests and motives of your subscribers. Knowing where they are going straight from your message can shape your next email.

Segmenting your list based on link activity allows you to target those subscribers creatively. Here are 3 ways.

Polling Email Subscribers

Including a poll somewhere in your message sequence can help you identify who your more engaged subscribers are. Take for example this email poll from popular magazine retailer, [Spiegel](#):

Even though they could easily use sales information to determine which of the three collections was most successful sales-wise, they included them in this email and asked subscribers to vote for their favorite by clicking through on specific links.

Then, once subscribers clicked to vote, they sent them to the landing page of the collection that they vote for and emailed voters a $10 coupon.

Offering Incentive for Clicks

Your email isn't a final destination. Of course you want subscribers to click through your message and return to your website to buy something from you.

Why not provide an incentive for them to do so? Turning the process of returning back to your site into a competition will excite readers and inspire them to click through. Here's how Atlus does it with their newsletter:

Not only were they randomly rewarding email subscribers that clicked through, but they also were giving away a free desktop wallpaper to each subscriber.

Using click tracking, Atlus saw which subscribers clicked on the download links, then randomly selected 100 people to receive a free baseball cap.

[TeeFury](#) also provides incentives for subscribers to keep reading and clicking on their emails:

Gauging Interest

It's easy to guess which of your products interest your customers based onsales history and trends. It's a lot harder to know for certain what people are truly interested in. Using a simple voting system in an email makes this easier.

With this email, the home goods catalog retailer Domestications gave subscribers a chance to influence *one* product that would go on sale – *one thing* that they might not normally buy, but would consider if it were less expensive.

They set up the message so that when readers clicked through, they were directed to the sales page for that product.

Using click tracking, they can determine exactly which product consumers wanted at a discount, then use email to inform subscribers of the outcome.

Segmenting Based on Survey Results

Subscribers may communicate their interests and preferences in surveys instead of on your web form, but you can still segment according to their answers.

For example, your real estate agency may want to email listings to your clients. Each client only wants listings for the neighborhoods they're house-hunting in.

To make this happen, send out a survey asking clients to click on their neighborhoods of interest. Link each option back to a hidden page on your site. Then create segments according to which links were clicked.

Segmenting Customers From Prospects

Segmenting helps you market differently to those who have bought from you and those who haven't.

For example, you could send e-book customers suggestions for practically applying ideas from the book or recommend similar products. Prospects still have to be sold on the merits of making the purchase.

Use retention tactics to turn them into lifelong customers by segmenting to:

- Ask for feedback about recent purchases

- Suggest additional and complimentary items

- Discuss different ways that customers can use the product that they purchased

- Suggest high ticket items

- Offer incentives geared only towards the big spender

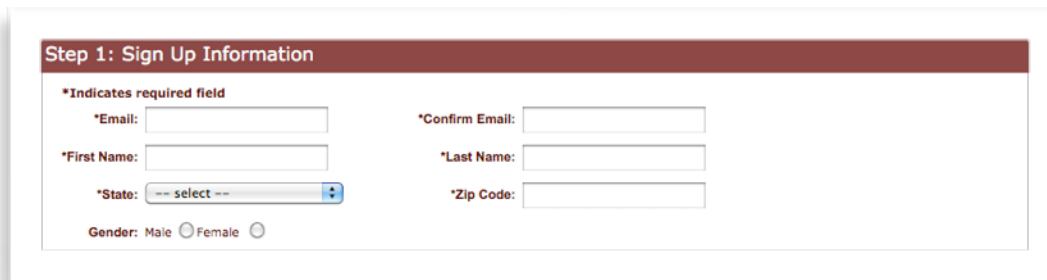For example, Amazon.com often sends emails based on previous purchases:
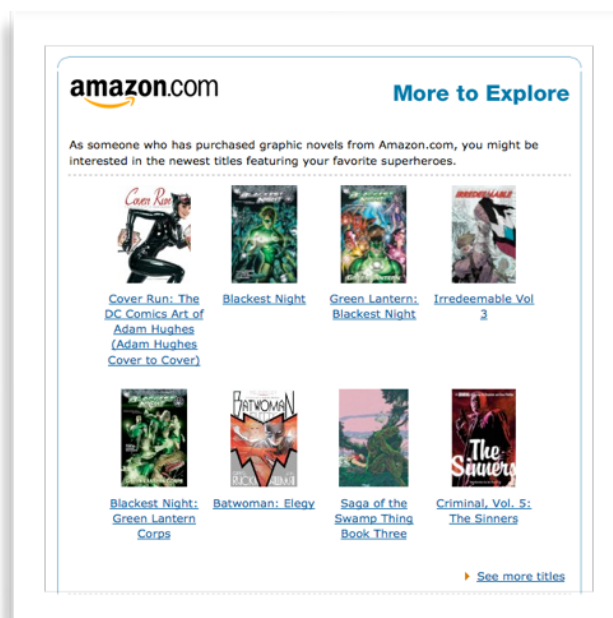
Segmenting Based On Web Form Preferences

When website visitors enter their information into a web form, it's the perfect chance to find out what they prefer as email subscribers.

This might be as simple as breaking up your content into a monthly newsletter, a weekly special and a daily deal. Or, your content could be entirely different for each choice, which depends on your business offering.

The easiest and least time consuming way to learn what information subscribers want to receive is to simply *ask*.

Hershey's Chocolate does this exceptionally well on their [email subscription page](). They require only the most basic information…
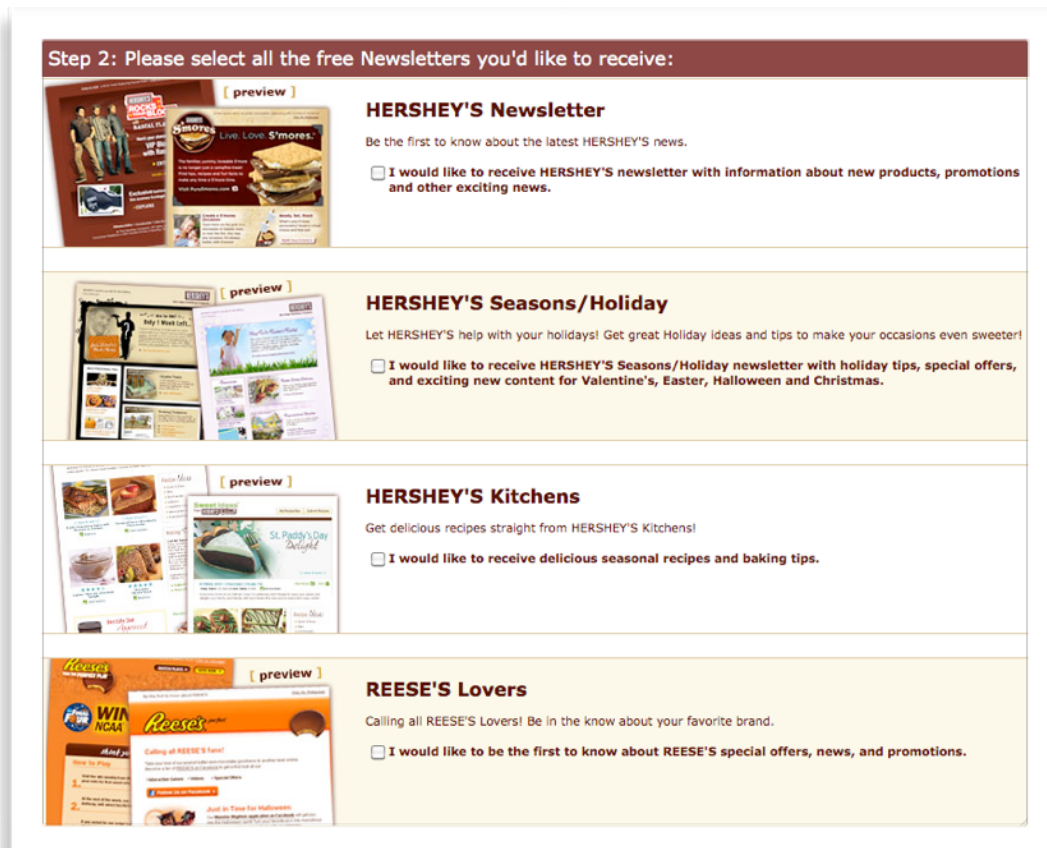
and then leave the important choices of which emails to sign up for up to the subscriber:

Giving Subscribers the Chance to Self-Segment

It's possible to measure the effectiveness of particular messages in your campaign and gauge your subscribers interest by adding a rating scale to your messages.

Rating scales allow subscribers to give feedback just by clicking on a link. A rating scale consists of a few links inserted in a logical order in your message.

You can use images that correlate with your product or service to create your scale, or use happy/sad faces to cover the range of performance.
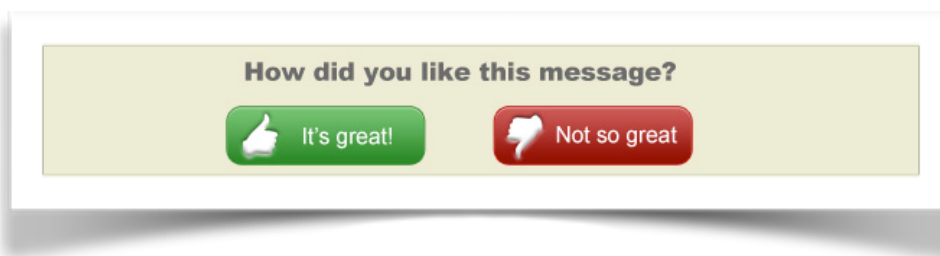
Your rating could be as simple as a thumbs up or thumbs down.

In fact, you can use these exact images if you would like!

Just save them, upload to your site, and then put them into your emails.

You can also use descriptive language; sometimes people identify better with words.
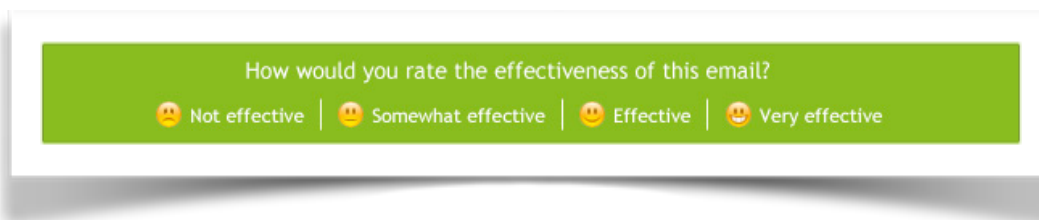
Feel free to copy and reuse any of these images as well.

You can pose a question about the effectiveness of your campaign, too, by typing the numbers 1-5 at the bottom of your email and linking those numbers to your thank you page.
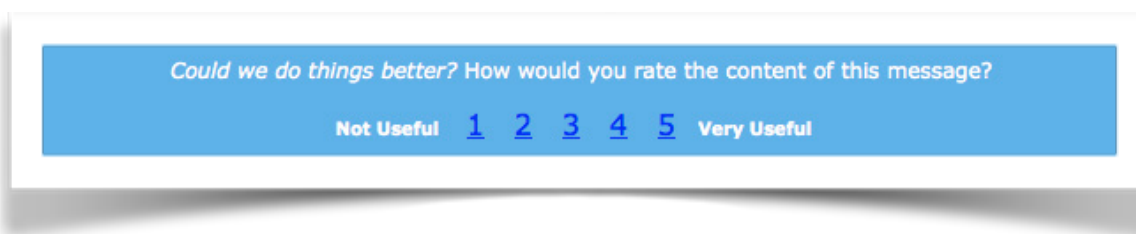
No matter what type of scale you choose, each of the links on the scale has to go to a thank you page. This will be the same for every link on the scale.

The thank you page should be a simple page that you create on your website to thank subscribers for their response and assure them that their actions will help you create better messages in the future.

There's no need to be elaborate, but you can certainly use the thank you page to further engage your readers once they have rated your message.

Because the thank you page is the same for each link, when you are inserting the links in your message you have to differentiate between the links so that you can properly track your ratings.
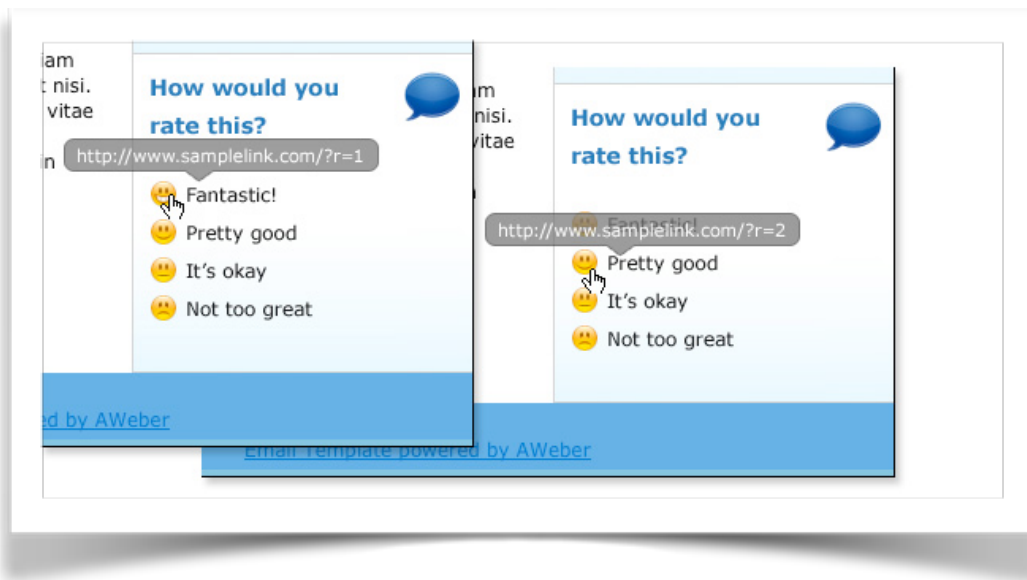
Add **?r=something** to the end of each link when you are inserting it into to your message. For example:

With click tracking enabled, once you send messages that contain your rating scale you will be able to view reports that illustrate how many subscribers clicked on the particular links on your scale.

You can also examine the number of subscribers who opened your message, and the number of subscribers that clicked on certain links on your rating scale.

While you can use click-through statistics for any links in your message to measure the effectiveness of your language and particular link text, using a rating scale allows you to explicitly ask subscribers to participate in your campaign.

You don't ask subscribers outright to click on each and every link in your message by posing a question or asking for a response. The call to action is what makes the rating scale an effective method that differs from regular click-through stats.

Whether you're sending to subscribers based on survey results, people who clicked on particular links in your message or customer status, sorting subscribers into segments based on their activity means you can send them the emails you know they really want. This way you can address each group of subscribers differently.

By offering a few simple preferences, your email campaign will be more professional and customizable and your website visitors will be happy to subscribe to it because they can control what they'll be receiving.

Give your subscribers the best possible email campaign. Start tracking behaviors now and see what a difference segmenting makes!

How to Segment Using AWeber

When you search through your subscribers, you do so using various search criteria. Segments are sets of search criteria that have been saved for later use, which are useful for searches that you frequently perform.

Within your AWeber account, there are two different ways to segment your subscribers:

1. On the Search Subscribers page
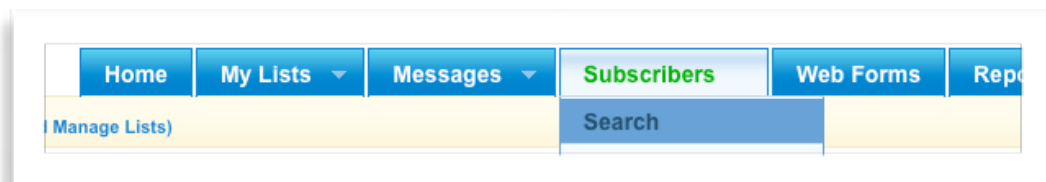
2. On the Broadcast QuickStats page

To send to a segment of subscribers based only on one specific message, it's easiest to use the Broadcast QuickStats page.

For more advanced searches, you would use the Search Subscribers page.
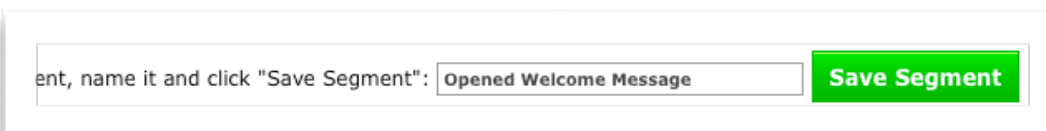
On the Search Subscribers Page

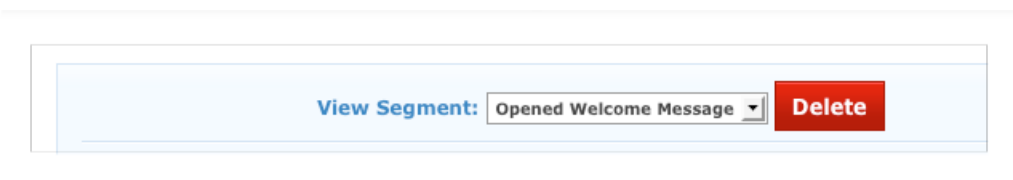1. Under the Subscribers tab, choose Search.

2. On the Search page, search for the segment of subscribers you would like to send to. Any search you do on this page can be saved as a segment. In the example below, we chose to search for everyone who opened the first follow up message. Click the Search button once you've chosen what to search for.

3. Once your search comes up, you can save it as a segment by giving it a name and clicking the Save Segment button.

4. Now that your segment has been saved, you can view it on the Search page at any time by selecting it from the View Segment drop down.

Then, send a broadcast a message to that segment.

This works just like sending a broadcast to your entire list, with one exception.

While editing your message, click the "Send to Segment" drop-down menu and choose the segment that you created from the list of options:
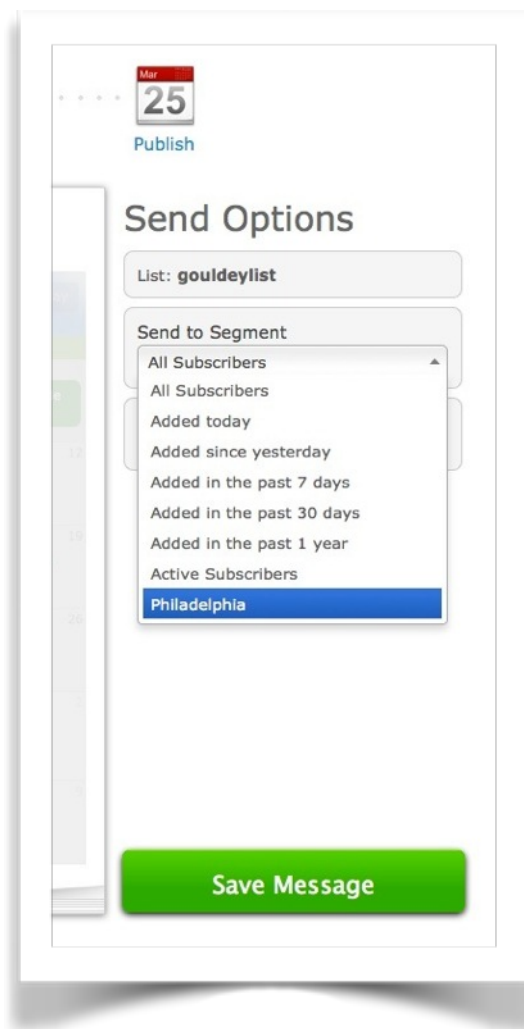
After you have edited your message and set your segment, click Save Message.

On the Broadcast QuickStats Page

If you have already sent broadcast messages, you can check back in later to analyze their performance.

Under the Messages tab, choose Broadcast. Broadcast Summary page allows you to quickly create segments based on how subscribers interacted with your message.

When you have chosen the Opens, Clicks, or Sales options on the QuickStats page, scroll down below the graph. On the right, you will see two options - one for subscribers who took the action in question (i.e. did open the message) and another for subscribers who did NOT take that action (i.e. did not open the message). Click the button for the group you are interested in.

Now, a little farther down the page, you will see a large green button on the right, labeled "Send Directly to These Subscribers" - click this.
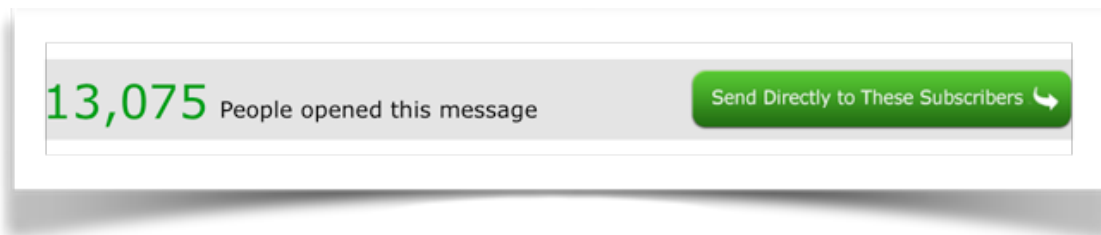
This will open a popup window. Here, name your segment, then click "Save Your Segment" to create a segment for later use, or "Send to Segment Now" to skip right to creating a broadcast to send to those subscribers.
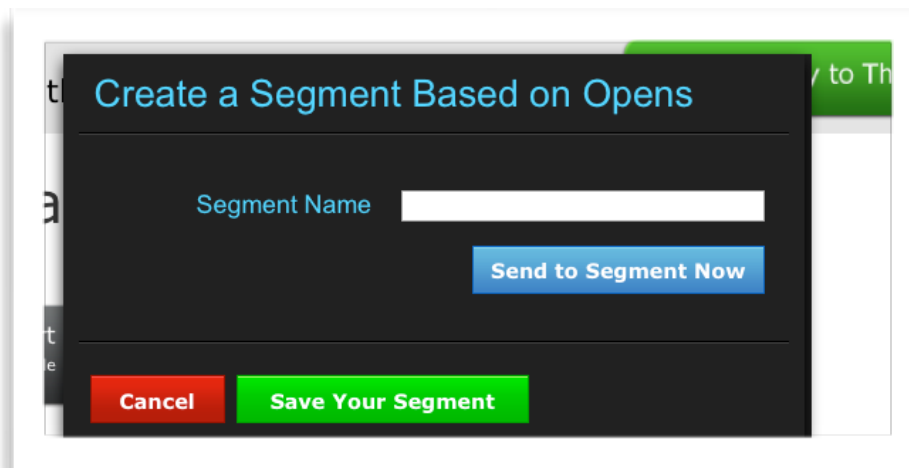
Segmentation Screwups: How Do You Recover?

Email segmentation is a funny thing.

Used well, it's one of those little extras that separates professional email marketing campaigns from disparate sequences of "spray and pray" messages.

It gets more of the right message to the right people at the right time, and it amplifies your response.

Used poorly or mistakenly, however, it can amplify the wrong kind of response.

It's possible to send an email to your entire list accidentally when you're in a rush. If you forget to choose a segment before you send, there's no way to reverse your mistake.

Take for instance this email that our Director of Education Marketing received from Borders advertising 40% off due to a store closing in Sacramento.

This is a nice way to tell Sacramento area customers about a chance to pick up some books on the cheap. As a sender, you could reasonably expect an amplified response rate to this email, since you're targeting people near that store who have likely shopped there before.

Thing is, Justin doesn't live in Sacramento. Or California. Or West of the Mississippi. Borders sent the email to all subscribers.

From a technical standpoint, this email is just a segmentation "whoops." Borders meant to send it only to subscribers in the Sacramento area. It's embarrassing and they probably lost some subscribers (in this case, the mis-segmentation likely **amplified their unsubscribes and complaint rate**).

The important thing is what happened afterward.

A couple hours later, this email showed up:
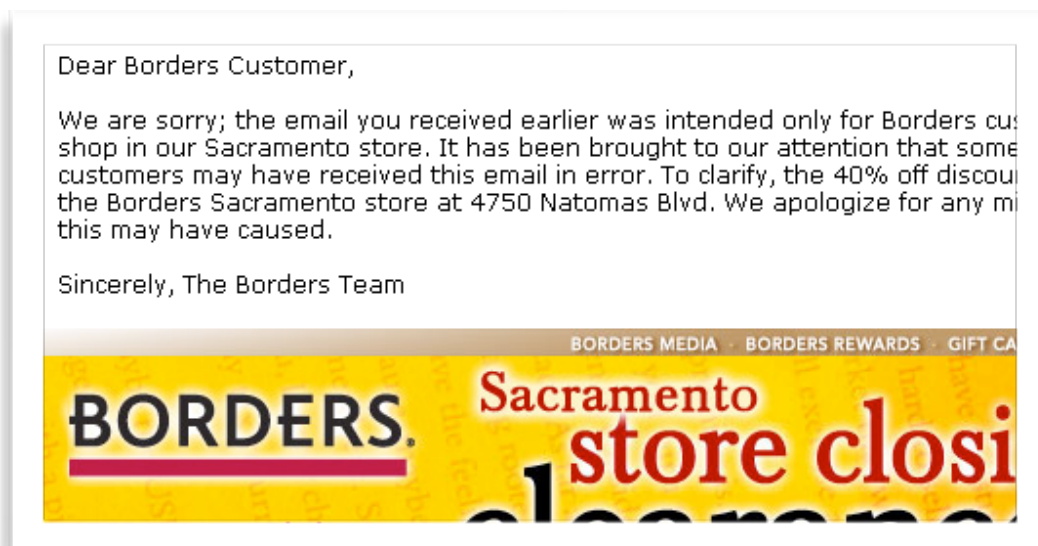
[(Click to see full email)](#)

From a technical standpoint, Borders "corrected" their mistake. They might have lost a few more subscribers who didn't see the first email, but so it goes. There was nothing else they could have done, right? Right?

Like any other "whoops" you might make, a poor segmentation can negatively affect customers' perception of your business. It can dissolve the relationship you've worked to build with them.

Borders saw their mistake and immediately went into "damage control" mode. Evidently they feared customers were going to show up to all Borders stores and demand 40% off, which confused store employees were unlikely to honor.

In doing that, they missed a HUGE marketing opportunity.

See, as a subscriber, the "whoops" email pointed out that someone else was getting a better deal.

Would it really have been so hard to give all subscribers a coupon for 40% off of one item?

Mistakes – or rather, your response to them – can also strengthen that relationship. As soon as you realize you've made a mistake, here's the plan for damage control:

1. **Decide Whether To Do Anything.** Yes, mis-segmentation is bad. But does sending a "correction" email make it better? If not, does any make it better? If not, you may be better off not sending one at all, and just moving on.

2. **Fess Up.** If subscribers are aware that something's amiss (even if they're not quite sure what), own up to what happened. Remember, you're trying to build a relationship with subscribers. You need their trust. Honesty goes a long way toward getting it.

3. **Make Lemonade.** Look for opportunities to turn your mistake into everyone's gain.

About AWeber

AWeber is an easy-to-use email marketing tool that allows business owners and entrepreneurs to cultivate relationships with their customers. Since 1998, AWeber has been the email engine powering the growth of organizations around the world, including leading sites like Social Media Examiner and ProBlogger and industry influencers such as Peter Shankman and Ann Handley.

Today, more than 120,000 small- and midsize-businesses, entrepreneurs, agencies and nonprofits are making the most of AWeber's sophisticated segmentation and analytics capabilities, split testing applications, extensive template libraries and industry-leading deliverability and live support.

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