

Appendix A: Guide to Dealing With Email Creative Rendering Under Outlook 2007

Just as the widespread adoption of Outlook 2003 brought considerations for education email marketers, so too will Outlook 2007. Although it is still early in the adoption cycle, with the strongest penetration in districts, you should begin to think about your email creatives in light of the restrictions that Outlook 2007 brings. Here is a short list of some of the changes you need to consider:

- No support for background images (HTML or CSS)
- No support for forms
- No support for Flash or other plug-ins
- No support for CSS floats
- No support for replacing bullets with images in unordered lists
- No support for CSS positioning
- No support for animated GIFS

Background

While background images have become very useful with most email browsers, as they could help stretch creatives and force widths as well as automatically be downloaded even with images turned off in Outlook 2003, they will not work at all in 2007. So keep an eye on your formatting if you were using it for that purpose. If you were using it to get around image suppression, you cannot rely on it for this anymore, design your messages to survive image suppression without using background images.

Animated GIFS

Support for animated GIFS is also not present in Outlook 2007. Only the first frame of the animation will render in Outlook 2007, so if you design the animated GIFS correctly, this could have less of an impact. Just be aware that 2007 viewers will not see anything past the first frame.

Be Careful With CSS

Probably the biggest challenge will be the fact that since Outlook 2007 does not support basic elements like *float* or *position*, it will break most CSS- based layouts. Designers will need to go back to using tables (along with inline CSS, which still works) for creating the basic layout of HTML email messages. This change highlights the need for dedicated and experienced HTML designers who can modify their creative designs to handle this. Be careful if you are using template services or historical creative that may be relying in CSS for its formatting. Above all, you should be aware of how your creative looks rendered in Outlook 2007, as it gains in education desktop market share.

The site Campaign Monitor has a very nice table of CSS tags and the email/web mail browsers that support them. <http://www.campaignmonitor.com/css/>

Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) – From W3CSchools.com

What is CSS?

- CSS stands for Cascading Style Sheets
- Styles define **how to display** HTML elements
- Styles are normally stored in **Style Sheets**
- Styles were added to HTML 4.0 **to solve a problem**
- **External Style Sheets** can save you a lot of work
- External Style Sheets are stored in **CSS files**
- Multiple style definitions will **cascade** into one

Styles Solve a Common Problem

HTML tags were originally designed to define the content of a document. They were supposed to say “This is a header,” “This is a paragraph,” and “This is a table” by using tags like `<h1>`, `<p>`, `<table>`, and so on. The layout of the document was supposed to be taken care of by the browser, without using any formatting tags.

As the two major browsers—Netscape and Internet Explorer—continued to add new HTML tags and attributes (like the `` tag and the color attribute) to the original HTML specification, it became more and more difficult to create websites where the content of HTML documents was clearly separated from the document’s presentation layout.

To solve this problem, the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)—the non-profit, standard-setting consortium, responsible for standardizing HTML—created **STYLES** in addition to HTML 4.0.

All major browsers support Cascading Style Sheets.

Style Sheets Can Save a Lot of Work

Styles sheets define how HTML elements are to be displayed, just like the font tag and the color attribute in HTML 3.2. Styles are normally saved in external `.css` files. External style sheets enable you to change the appearance and layout of all the pages in your web, just by editing one single CSS document!

CSS is a breakthrough in web design because it allows developers to control the style and layout of multiple web pages all at once. As a web developer, you can define a style for each HTML element and apply it to as many web pages as you want. To make a global change, simply change the style, and all elements in the web are updated automatically.

Multiple Styles Will Cascade Into One

Style sheets allow style information to be specified in many ways. Styles can be specified inside a single HTML element, inside the `<head>` element of an HTML page, or in an external CSS file. Even multiple external style sheets can be referenced inside a single HTML document.