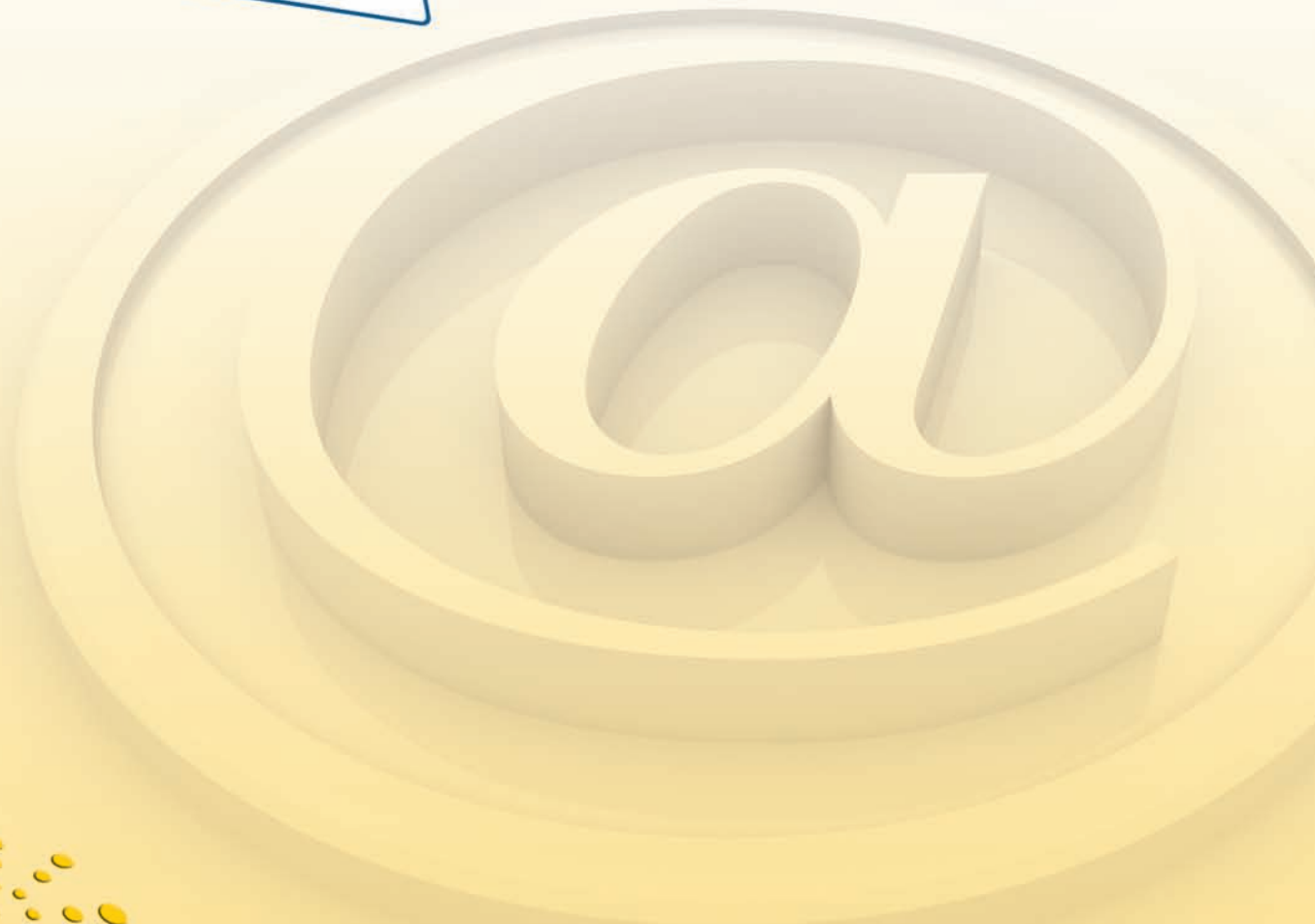


Email Trends

in the Education Market 2007:

**A Comprehensive Analysis
of the 2006-2007 School Year**

By Gretchen W. Rigol and Christopher Ziemnicki



Email Trends in the Education Market 2007: A Comprehensive Analysis of the
2006-2007 School Year

Published by MDR
A D&B Company
6 Armstrong Road
Shelton, CT 06484
www.schooldata.com

© Copyright 2007 Market Data Retrieval.

All rights reserved. No part of this report may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 COPYRIGHT ACT, or in writing by MDR, 6 Armstrong Road, Shelton, CT 06484.

MDR and its agents have exercised reasonable efforts in gathering and preparing data and information published in *Email Trends in the Education Market 2007: A Comprehensive Analysis of the 2006-2007 School Year*. MDR does not assume and hereby disclaims any liability for any loss or damage caused by errors or omissions resulting from negligence, accident, or other causes.

ISBN 1-57953-592-5
ISSN 1933-7302

Introduction

As a leading U.S. provider of sales and marketing services for the education market, MDR has a rich database of information about schools, districts, libraries, and colleges and universities. Through continuous outreach to these markets, MDR has compiled detailed mailing lists, including email addresses at more than 70% of the U.S. public school and 73% of the higher education universe. Many companies with products and services for education markets utilize MDR's full-service e-marketing solutions to reach prospective customers and to augment their customer files with email data from MDR's database.

This report summarizes information about education marketers' use of MDR's email database to reach various segments of K-12 and collegiate markets during the 2006-2007 school year. Chapter 1 provides information about prospecting campaigns deployed by MDR through its E@quire service on behalf of education marketers. Chapter 2 describes campaigns launched to clients' customers through MDR's E@ppend service. Campaign size and timing (month and day of the week), Open and Click-Through rates, and other data are summarized.

To augment these summaries, MDR conducted an email survey of education marketers to gather their views on marketing techniques, how various marketing approaches have changed, and their forecast of future marketing efforts. Results from this survey are described in Chapter 3.

Finally, a number of additional analyses were performed on the database of prospecting campaigns to analyze the technical characteristics of the components of these email campaigns, as well as their purposes and the specific content. These supplemental summaries are provided in Chapter 4.

The goal of this report is to provide benchmark data about how education marketers utilize email, effectiveness data (in terms of Open and Click-Through rates), and other information about the characteristics of email campaigns. Also included are suggestions about future trends and specific recommendations to help companies providing services to the educators make the best use of e-marketing as an integral part of their overall marketing efforts.

Executive Summary

The data in this report reveal that e-marketing has become a critical element of the tools that education marketers use to reach prospective customers, as well as to strengthen and enhance their relationship with current customers. The frequency and volume of email communication have increased substantially over the past year, and marketers forecast even more use of email in the future—with clear signs that electronic communication is gradually replacing print media as the primary means of transmitting information to the education marketplace. While most marketers are not yet abandoning print catalogs and direct mail, many are reducing quantities, size, and/or frequency of print publications and increasing their use of email and other electronic communication avenues (particularly company Web sites).

This report also illustrates the many creative ways in which companies serving K-12 schools and higher education have incorporated the use of email in their overall marketing mix. Email is used for direct sales, but it's also used to reinforce other marketing activities, such as branding, to alert prospects and customers about direct mail and attendance at trade shows and conferences, to solicit information through surveys, and to provide a variety of value-added resources.

Highlighted below are key findings from the data analysis of nearly 3,800 prospecting email campaigns and more than 200 customer campaigns deployed by MDR on behalf of companies during the 2006-2007 school year. Also included is a summary of the results of a survey of education marketers conducted in September 2007 and a summary of special analyses of the content and technical characteristics of 2006-2007 prospecting campaigns.

Prospecting Email Campaigns 2006-2007

Companies increased their use of prospecting campaigns, launching 74% more campaigns than the prior year. The average size of these campaigns also increased to 7,730 emails per campaign.

The average Open rate for 2006-2007 was 14.2%, compared with 18.5% in the prior year.

These rates have been declining since the introduction of Outlook 2003 and other software that reduce the ability of companies to accurately track Open rates.

Several industries and audiences recorded considerably higher Open rates. The average Open rate for email from government agencies was 25.7% and 20.8% from college textbook publishers. Campaigns directed exclusively to higher education had an average Open rate of 20.3%.

Smaller segmented campaigns tend to have higher Open and Click-Through rates than larger campaigns. The average Open and Click-Through rates for campaigns from 100-999 recipients were 20.6% and 5.8%, respectively. For campaigns over 40,000 in size, the average Open rate was 12.5%, and the average Click-Through rate was 2.4%.

March and May were the most popular months for prospecting campaigns and accounted for 30% of the total number of emails sent during the year. Nearly the same number of prospecting emails was sent during the three fall months—September, October, and November.

Customer Email Campaigns 2006-2007

Customer campaigns had higher average Open and Click-Through rates than prospecting campaigns. Open rates for customer campaigns averaged 14.9%, compared with 14.2% for prospecting campaigns. Click-Through rates were 3.5% for customer campaigns and 2.8% for prospecting campaigns.

Four industries had average Open rates of 20% or higher from their customer campaigns. These were education institutions (26.9%), college textbook publishers (26.0%), basal textbook publishers (25.3%), and list brokers/wholesalers (20.0%).

Small campaigns had considerably higher Open rates than large campaigns. The average Open rate for campaigns to fewer than 1,000 recipients was 23.5%, compared with 11.8% for campaigns of 20,000 or more.

Customer campaigns tend to be more evenly spread out over the year than prospecting campaigns. In addition, customer campaigns were deployed more evenly throughout the workweek.

Survey of Education Marketers

The vast majority of education marketers engaged in direct mail (93%) and email marketing (87%) activities during the past year. Other major marketing activities included maintaining an eCommerce Web site (72%), sending out catalogs (71%), and print advertisements (57%).

The most common use of email (reported by 80% of survey respondents) was to provide product information or special offers to customers. Other purposes included prospecting, transactional information, announcements, to offer samples, and to drive traffic to the company Web site.

During the upcoming year, increased spending for email marketing is projected by 57% of the education marketers. Decreases were forecast for catalogs, direct mail, and print advertising.

Email marketing ranked third in a list of eight marketing channels. The highest rating was given to sales force lead generation, followed by catalogs.

Characteristics of Prospecting Campaigns

Personalization improves Open rates. The analysis of a sample of September 2006 and May 2007 prospecting campaigns deployed by MDR reveals that personalized emails had higher Open rates (18.5%) than those that were not personalized (15.9%).

More than two-thirds of prospecting campaigns were designed to increase traffic to their company Web sites. Additional purposes included branding and general product information, direct sales, lead generation, invitations to events, surveys, requests for samples, and direct mail follow-up.

Short subject lines and the inclusion of certain words are associated with higher Open rates.

The following words tended to yield high Open rates: cash, evaluation, improved, important, new, and you.

Some email best practices have not yet been embraced. Analysis shows that very few education marketers are making use of some widely cited email marketing best practices, such as including add to address book instructions and using hosted Web page versions of the email.

Most marketers are dealing with image suppression. When looking at the sample campaigns, the vast majority of them utilized some form of text with image combination, such that they might still be effective with images suppressed. However, an alarming 12.5% are still utilizing image maps.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Executive Summary.....	2
Table of Contents	5
List of Charts.....	7
List of Tables	8
Chapter 1 Prospecting Email Campaigns 2006-2007	9
Overview.....	9
Summary of the School Year 2006-2007	9
Campaign Size	13
Types of Companies Sending Email to the Education Market.....	16
Size and Other Characteristics of Email Campaigns.....	18
Time of Year Prospecting Campaigns Sent to the Education Market.....	20
Day of the Week Email Campaigns Sent to the Education Market.....	24
What Are the Characteristics of Campaigns With Extremely High Open Rates?.....	27
Lessons Learned From 2007 Prospecting Campaigns	28
Chapter 2 Customer Email Campaigns 2006-2007	29
Overview.....	29
Summary of the School Year 2006-2007	29
Campaign Size	33
Types of Companies Sending Customer Emails	35
Size and Other Characteristics of Email Campaigns.....	35
Time of Year Customer Email Campaigns Sent to the Education Market.....	37
Day of the Week Customer Email Campaigns Sent to the Education Market.....	39
Lessons Learned From 2007 Customer Campaigns	40

Chapter 3	Survey of Education Marketers	41
	Overview.....	41
	Major Direct Marketing Activities	41
	Email Marketing Techniques	42
	Sales Force.....	43
	Marketing Budgets and Source of Revenue.....	44
	Forecast of Future Spending Increases.....	45
	Forecast of Future Spending Decreases.....	47
	Effectiveness of Sales/Marketing Channels.....	48
	Lessons Learned From 2007 Survey of Education Marketers.....	49
Chapter 4	Characteristics of Prospecting Campaigns.....	50
	Overview.....	50
	Impact of Email Creative on Message Effectiveness—From Deployment to Conversion	50
	Subject Lines	50
	Reviewing Subject Lines	52
	Message Content	56
	Campaign Objectives	58
	Special Offers	60
	Personalization.....	61
	Add to Address Book Instructions	61
	Hosted Web Page Versions of Email Message	62
	Technical Characteristics.....	63
	Lessons Learned From Analysis of Characteristics of 2007 Prospecting Campaigns	65
	About the Authors	66
	About MDR	66

List of Charts

- Chart 1.1 Average Open and Click-Through Rates of 2007 Prospecting Campaigns by Industry
- Chart 1.2 Percentage of Prospecting Campaigns by Size 2007 and 2006
- Chart 1.3 Open Rates by Size of Prospecting Campaign 2007 and 2006
- Chart 1.4 Click-Through Rates by Size of Prospecting Campaign 2007 and 2006
- Chart 1.5 Percentage of Prospecting Campaigns by Types of Publishing Companies
- Chart 1.6 Percentage of Total 2007 Prospecting Emails Sent by Company Type
- Chart 1.7 Percentage of Prospecting Emails Sent by Month 2007 and 2006
- Chart 1.8 Open Rates of Prospecting Campaigns by Month 2007 and 2006
- Chart 1.9 Click-Through Rates of Prospecting Campaigns by Month 2007 and 2006
- Chart 1.10 Percentage of Emails Delivered by Day of Week 2007 and 2006
- Chart 1.11 Average Open Rates by Day of Week
- Chart 1.12 Average Click-Through Rates by Day of Week
- Chart 2.1 Open and Click-Through Rates of Customer Campaigns, Five-Year Comparison
- Chart 2.2 2007 Customer and Prospecting Open and Click-Through Rates
- Chart 2.3 Average Open and Click-Through Rates of 2007 Customer Campaigns by Industry
- Chart 2.4 Percentage of Customer Campaigns by Size
- Chart 2.5 Open and Click-Through Rates by Size of Customer Campaign
- Chart 2.6 Percentage of Campaigns Deployed by Company Type
- Chart 2.7 Percentage of Emails Sent to Customers and Prospects by Month
- Chart 2.8 Average Open and Click-Through Rates for Customer Campaigns by Month
- Chart 2.9 Percentage of Total Customer Emails Sent by Day of Week
- Chart 2.10 Average Open and Click-Through Rates by Day for Customer Campaigns
- Chart 3.1 Percentage of Direct Marketing Activities Utilized in Past 12 Months
- Chart 3.2 Percentage of Budget and Revenue by Marketing Channel
- Chart 3.3 Forecasted Increases in Spending in Next 12 Months
- Chart 3.4 Forecasted Decreases in Spending in Next 12 Months
- Chart 3.5 Overall Effectiveness by Marketing Channel
- Chart 4.1 Number of Words in Subject Lines, Percentage of Total Prospecting Campaigns

Chart 4.2	Number of Words in Body Text, Percentage of Total Prospecting Campaigns
Chart 4.3	Open and Click-Through Rates by Campaign Objectives
Chart 4.4	Open Rates for Personalized and Letter Format Campaigns
Chart 4.5	Image Utilization by Prospecting Campaigns

List of Tables

Table 1.1	Summary of 2007 School Year Prospecting Campaigns
Table 1.2	Percentage of Total Prospecting Campaigns by Company Type
Table 1.3	Average Prospecting Campaign Size and Open and Click-Through Rates by Company Type
Table 1.4	Highest and Lowest 2007 Prospecting Campaign Size and Open Rates
Table 1.5	Number of Prospecting Campaigns by Month
Table 1.6	Average Number of Emails Sent by Month
Table 2.1	Summary of Customer Campaigns by Company Type
Table 2.2	Open Rates by Company Type
Table 3.1	Activities Utilized as Part of Integrated or Multi-Channel Marketing
Table 3.2	Types of Direct Sales
Table 4.1	Attributes Attributed to Opening Emails
Table 4.2	Word Use Frequency in Subject Lines of Prospecting Campaigns
Table 4.3	Frequency and Open Rates for Special Characters Used in Subject Lines of Prospecting Campaigns
Table 4.4	Word Use Frequency in Message Content of Prospecting Campaigns
Table 4.5	Frequency of Use of Special Characters in Message Content of Prospecting Campaigns
Table 4.6	Objectives of Sample of September 2006 and May 2007 Prospecting Campaigns
Table 4.7	Open and Click-Through Rates by Utilization of Image Maps

▼ CHAPTER 1

Prospecting Email Campaigns 2006-2007

Overview

Email has become an ever-increasing medium of choice for education marketers' prospecting and lead generation. Each year, hundreds of companies, associations, and other organizations use prospecting email lists from MDR's comprehensive database of school and college personnel to reach education decision makers with information about their products and services. This chapter analyzes information about the prospecting email campaigns that MDR launched between July 1, 2006, and June 30, 2007, on behalf of these clients. Campaign size, Open and Click-Through rates, and other data are summarized to provide baseline information against which education marketers can evaluate their past practices and refine their future marketing programs.

Summary of the School Year 2006-2007

There was considerable growth in email marketing to educators in public and private K-12 schools and higher education during the 2007 school year.¹ The number of campaigns tracked in this report is 3,759, a 74% increase over 2006, and the total number of individual emails sent during this period nearly doubled compared with the prior year. Recipients opened 4.1 million of these emails, with more than 800,000 Click-Throughs recorded.

► TABLE 1.1 Summary of 2007 School Year Prospecting Campaigns

Prospecting Campaign	2007	2006	% Change
Number of campaigns	3,759	2,155	74
Number of opened emails	4.1 million	2.7 million	52
Number of Click-Throughs	801,410	450,000	78
Average Open rate	14.2%	18.5%	-23
Average Click-Through rate	2.8%	3.0%	-7

¹Throughout this report, 2007 will be used to refer to the 2006-2007 school year; 2006 will refer to the 2005-2006 school year.

The average Open rate in 2007 was 14.2%. This represents a 23% decline compared with the prior year—continuing a steady decline in Open rates since 2003-2004. This decline is in line with the continued adoption of Outlook 2003 that has been affecting open rates over the past few years. This decline in measured Open rates does not mean that fewer emails are being opened, but rather, less emails are being recorded as opened due to automatic image suppression introduced in Outlook 2003. This of course still impacts the email campaign from a measurement standpoint as well as its overall effectiveness if the creative is not modified to take into account for this image suppression issue.

A Note About Open Rates

It should be noted that campaign results Open rates have seen a sharp decline over the past couple of years in the educational email marketing space. This mirrors the rest of the email world as this metric has been impacted by the no-image phenomenon that has been introduced by ISPs and by software companies during the past couple of years.

Background: Open rates are recorded by the tracking of a call for an image in the email creative, typically a very small invisible graphic that is embedded in the email art or copy. So in order to record an Open, the end reader's email software has to be able to support HTML, and it has to be connected to the Internet to send a call for the image to be deployed by the vendor's server.

To combat the onslaught of spam over the past several years and the increase of malicious viruses and spyware being sent via email, one technical fix that has been implemented is to turn off the automatic retrieval of images that are in an HTML email. The person still sees the message, but since there are no images in the creative, it may look jumbled or incomplete, and the fact that the email was opened is never recorded.

So what this means is that email Open rates have artificially decreased in the past two years. In the education email marketing space, this is caused primarily by the adoption of Outlook 2003 into schools. Companies began experiencing a decline in Open rates starting in 2003-2004, and the declines are continuing.

What does this mean to the education marketer? Expectations need to be adjusted downward, as forecasted Open rates are established for each campaign. Campaigns that had been getting 20% Open rates last year are now getting 14% can still be highly responsive campaigns, as long as marketers take into account this image suppression issue and follow best practices to get the most from their campaigns.

This starts with thinking about the email creative. Graphic intense messages will render unreadable or terribly jumbled, making them ineffective. Many successful education email marketers have already learned how to design an email creative so that it looks good with the images turned off. For more information and examples, you can refer to this article: *Educational E-Marketer's Guide to Working Effectively With Outlook 2003* (<http://www.schooldata.com/emarketersguide.html>).

The fact that the average Click-Through rate in 2007 declined a mere two tenths of a percent compared with 2006 provides evidence that recipients are indeed looking at email from marketers of education-related products and services—even as the number of campaigns and number of emails sent have grown. This average Click-Through rate calculated across an increased base of campaigns. While a possible consequence of the increase in email marketing might be less attention by recipients, the increase in Click-Through rates for a large number of individual campaigns indicates that overall educational prospecting email remains an effective and responsive marketing tool.

Many individual campaigns had Open and/or Click-Through rates considerably higher or lower than these averages. Open rates ranged from a high of 54.8% to 0%, and Click-Through rates ranged from 0% to more than 50%. On the high end were 428 campaigns with Open rates of 25% or more. These 428 campaigns also had an average Click-Through rate of 10.6%. More information about these high Open-rate campaigns is provided at the end of this chapter.

There is considerable variation in Open and Click-Through rates by industry group and also by targeted market. Government agencies, probably due to name recognition, have the highest Open rate. Publishers of college textbooks also have both high Open and Click-Through rates, perhaps because their market is extremely well-defined and contained, and as will be seen, these companies tend to deploy smaller campaigns.

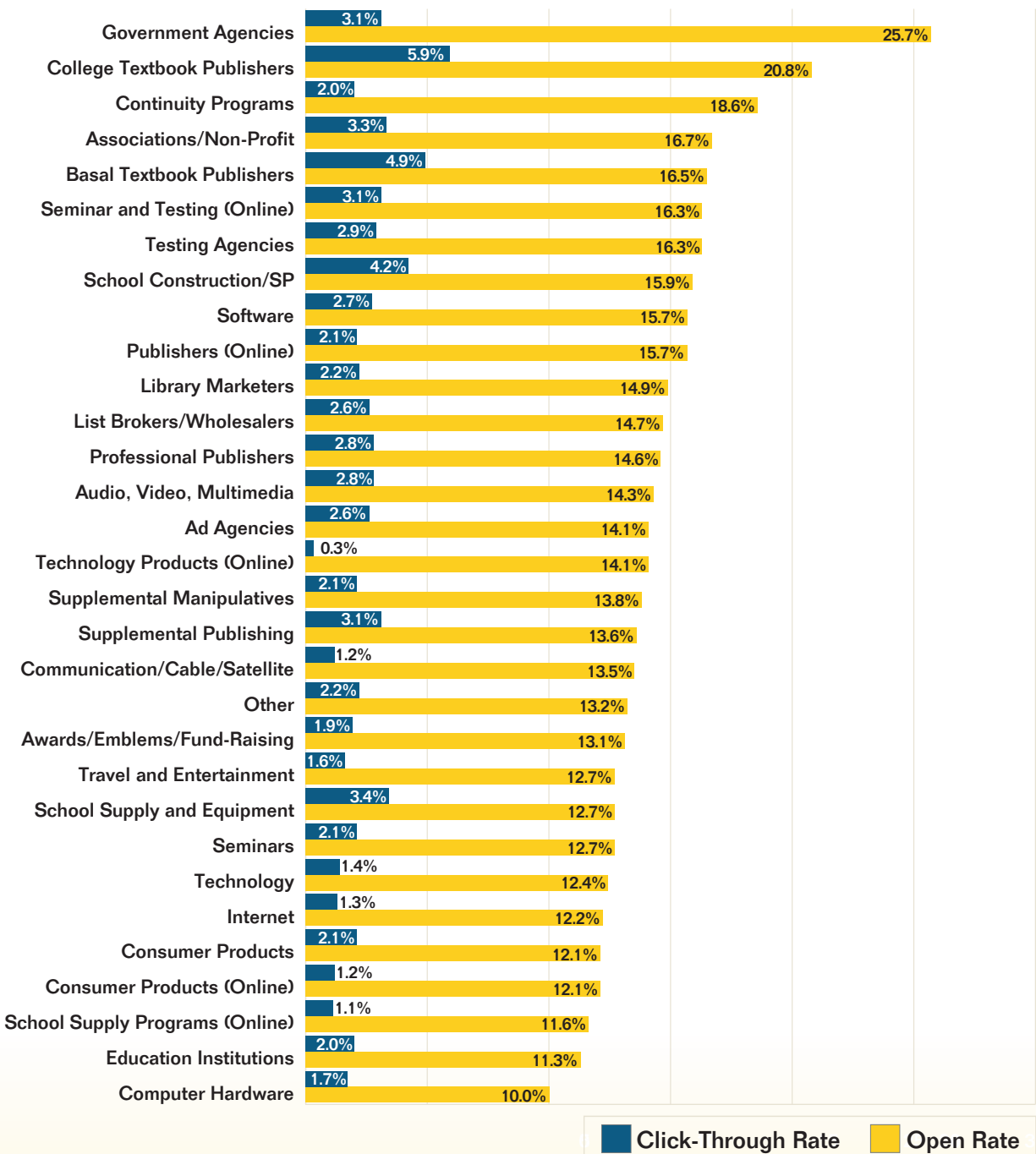
Developing an Email Campaign Takes Time and Resources

Effective e-marketing requires careful planning—from well-defined goals to carefully thought-through implementation strategies to back-end evaluation techniques.

Key questions that should be addressed before launching an email campaign are:

- ▶ What specifically do you want to accomplish?
- ▶ Have you allocated sufficient resources for all aspects of the campaign?
- ▶ Is your message crafted appropriately for email?
- ▶ Are you using “from” and “subject” lines that will create interest from your audience?
- ▶ What is the best time to send your campaign?
- ▶ Do you have a plan to test different approaches?
- ▶ Is the campaign integrated with other marketing efforts?
- ▶ Can you track your results?
- ▶ Will you be able to analyze the campaign’s effectiveness and act on this information in developing future campaigns?

► **CHART 1.1** Average Open and Click-Through Rates of 2007 Prospecting Campaigns by Industry

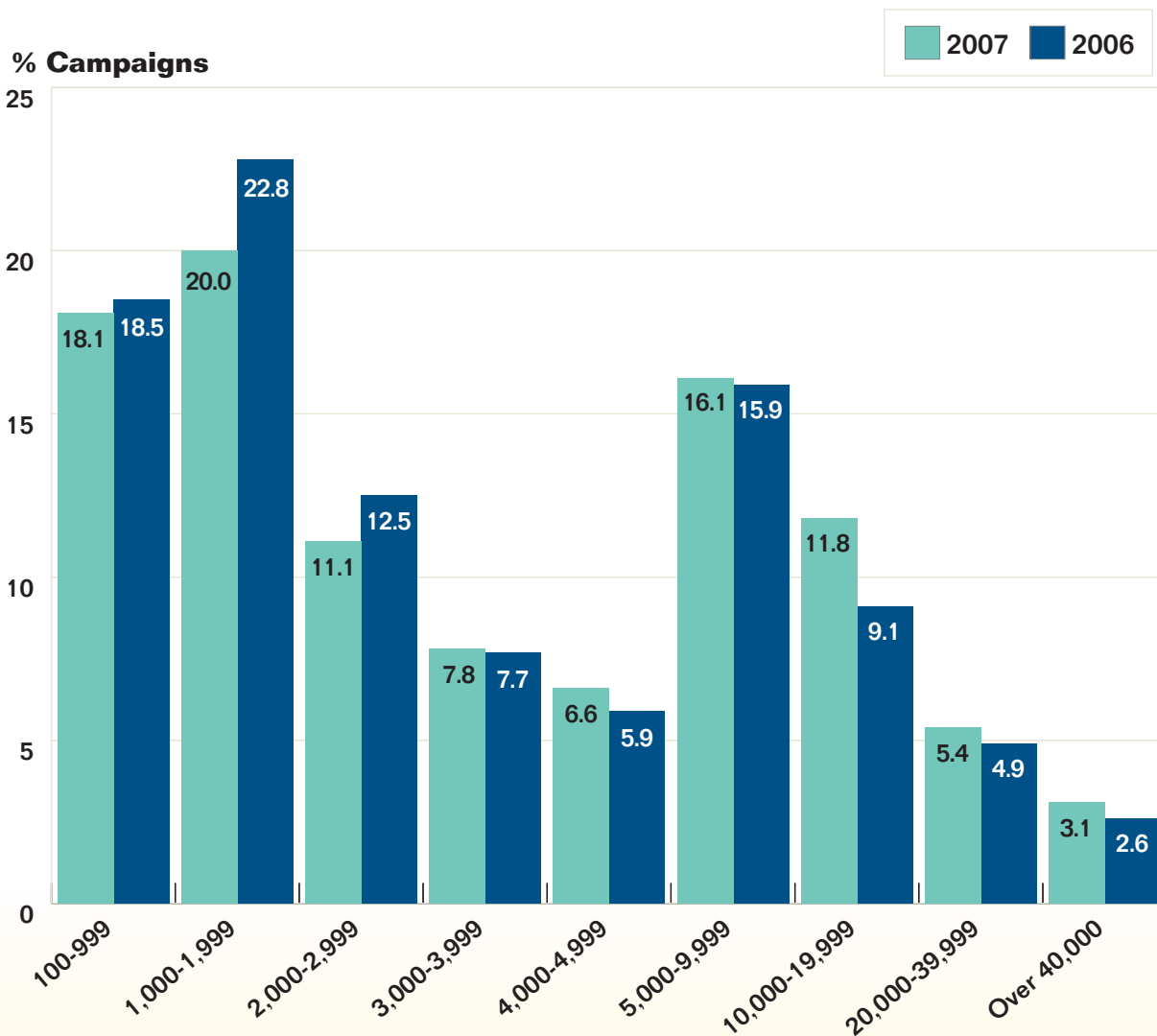


Campaigns directed exclusively to the higher education market had higher Open and Click-Through rates (20.8% and 5.9%, respectively) than campaigns directed to other or mixed-market segments. Most of these higher education marketers are publishers, not only of college textbooks but also of basal textbooks and professional and supplemental materials.

Campaign Size

In 2007, the average number of emails sent per campaign was 7,730, an increase of nearly 1,000 compared with 2006. There was, however, considerable variation, with a handful of campaigns sent to only about 100 educators, and on the other end of the spectrum, several campaigns deployed to more than 200,000 educators. One in five campaigns ranged in size from 1,000 to 1,999, followed by 18% under 1,000 and 16% from 5,000 to 9,999. Campaigns of 20,000 or more email addresses were relatively rare and accounted for only 8.5% of the total number of campaigns.

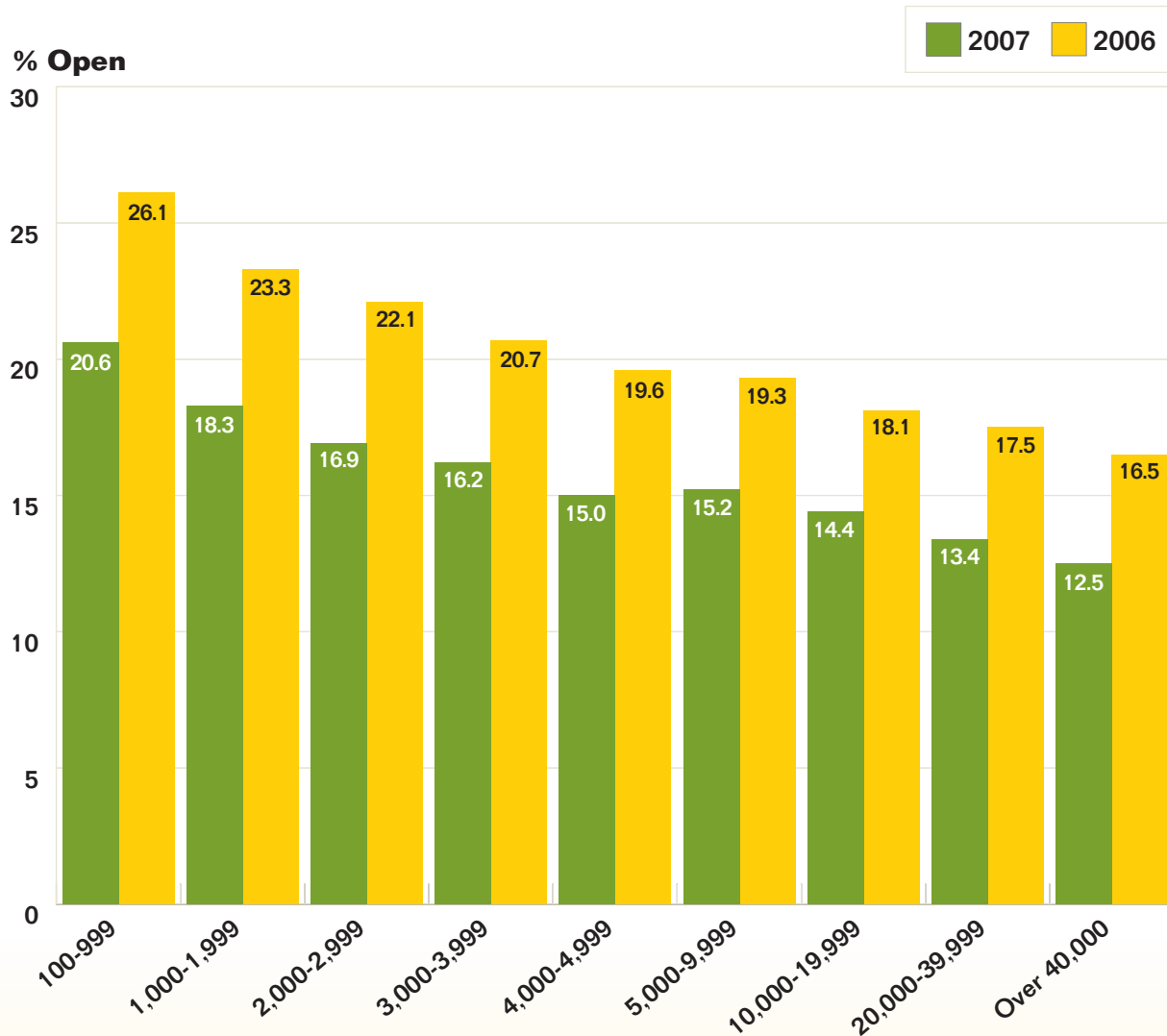
► **CHART 1.2** Percentage of Prospecting Campaigns by Size 2007 and 2006



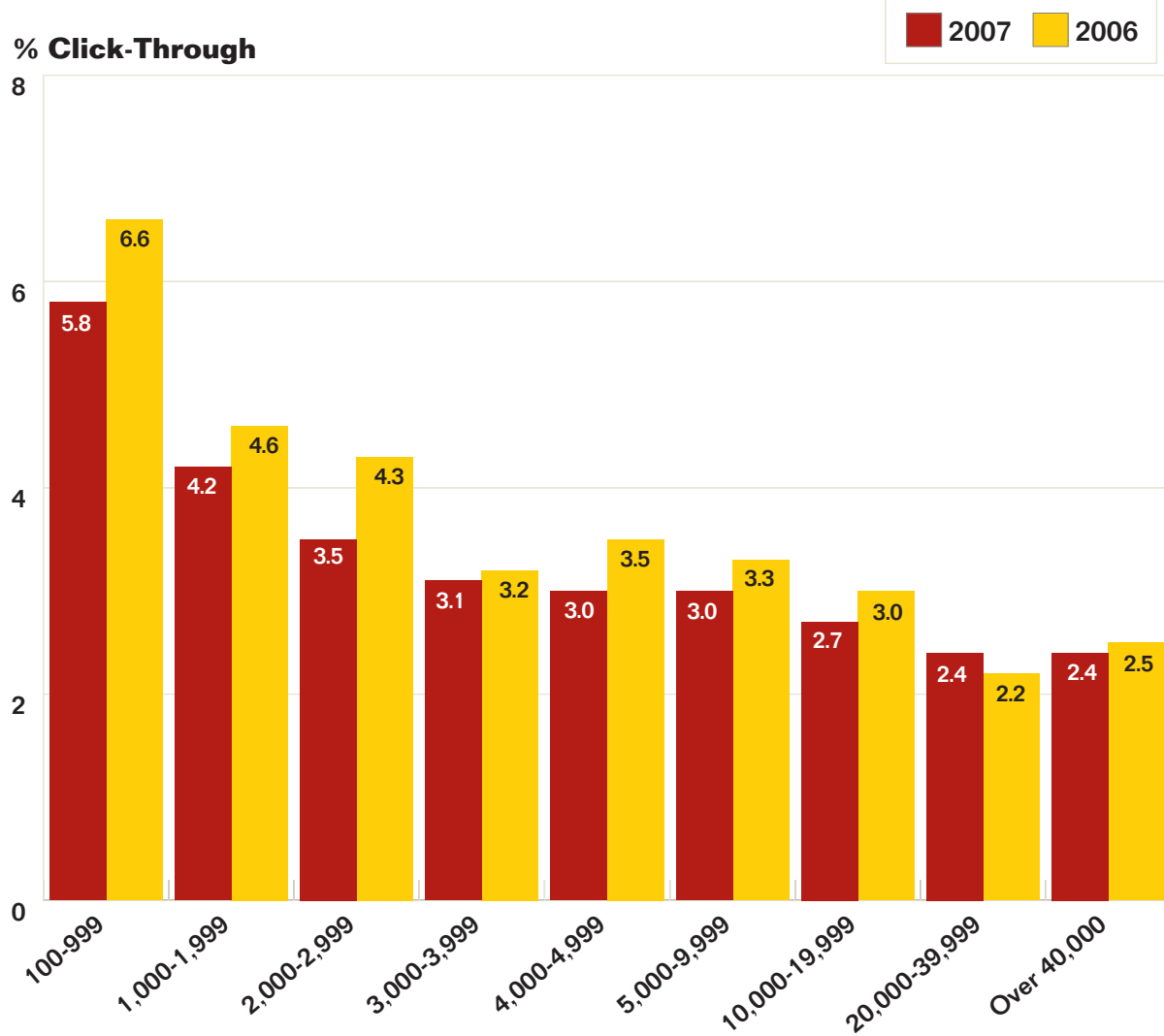
It's interesting that the breakdown by campaign size has remained remarkably similar over the past two years. The only minor shifts that occurred were a slight increase in the number of campaigns between 10,000 and 19,999 and a slight decrease in the number of campaigns between 1,000 to 1,999.

One likely reason that campaign size tends to be skewed toward smaller numbers is the general rule in marketing research that narrowly targeted campaigns are most likely to produce the best results. This principle holds true for email campaigns directed toward the education market, as is borne out by the data analyzed in this report. In fact, as the following two charts illustrate, there is a very strong, positive relationship between size of campaign and Open and Click-Through rates. The data from the past two years clearly show that smaller campaigns have considerably higher Open and Click-Through rates than larger campaigns.

► **CHART 1.3** Open Rates by Size of Prospecting Campaign 2007 and 2006



► **CHART 1.4** Click-Through Rates by Size of Prospecting Campaign
2007 and 2006



Types of Companies Sending Email to the Education Market

The companies that used prospecting email campaigns were classified into seven broad categories. Publishers launched the highest number of campaigns, accounting for more than one-third of all email campaigns to educators. Technology-related companies sent the next highest number of campaigns, closely followed by companies selling school supplies, programs, and manipulatives.

► **TABLE 1.2** Percentage of Total Prospecting Campaigns by Company Type

Company Type	% of Campaigns
Publishers	34.6
Technology Related	19.7
School Supplies, Programs, and Manipulatives	18.7
Resellers	7.8
Consumer Related	7.7
Public Institutions	7.0
Seminars and Testing Agencies	4.5

Publishers. Within the publishing category are companies that publish college textbooks, basal textbooks, and professional (reference) books as well as library marketers. Online publishers are also included. Publishers of college textbooks accounted for nearly 60% of the total campaigns launched by the publishing category, followed by library marketers at 18.3%.

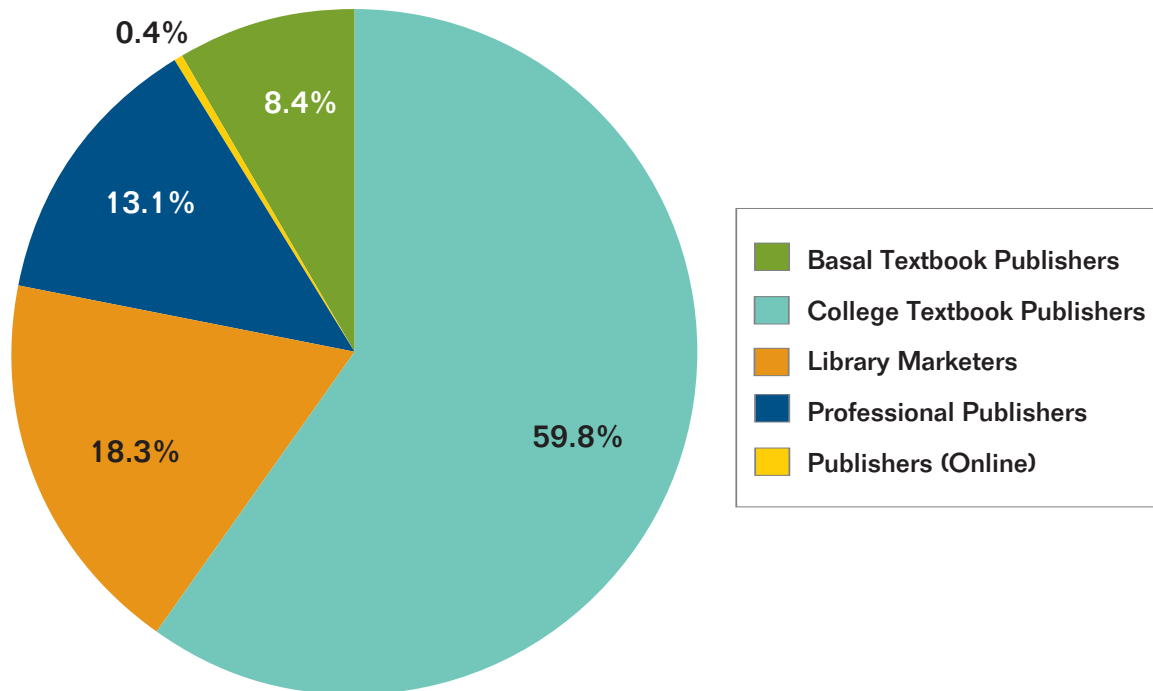
Targeting Your Audience and Messages

As with direct mail, effective e-marketing requires a disciplined approach to market segmentation and narrowly focusing your message to the interests and needs of each unique group.

Start with your known strength—your existing customers:

- Make sure you have up-to-date email addresses for your current customers. If your records are not complete, take steps to append email addresses to your customer files.
- Build an in-house email list through the company Web site, conferences, and any other contacts you might have with potential customers.
- Target teachers and administrators from schools or districts where you already have customers.
- Profile customers and identify prospects with similar characteristics.
- Segment your campaigns by job function, subject areas, geographic location, etc.
- Tailor your messages to provide solutions or value-based information of particular interest for the targeted group.

► **CHART 1.5** Percentage of Prospecting Campaigns by Types of Publishing Companies



Technology-Related Companies. This category includes general technology companies, as well as those specializing in computer hardware, software, audio, video, multimedia, Internet, communication, cable, and satellite. The general technology and software groups each account for approximately one-third of the technology-related campaigns.

School Supplies, Programs, and Manipulatives. Included within this category are a broad range of companies that sell school supplies. Marketers of supplemental curricular materials accounted for the largest number of campaigns. Other products in this category are general school supplies and equipment, awards, emblems, and fund-raising items, supplemental manipulatives, continuity programs, and school construction.

Resellers. This category includes list brokers, wholesalers, and ad agencies.

Consumer-Related Companies. In addition to marketers of consumer products, this category includes companies in the travel and entertainment field, as well as a variety of other companies that are not specifically education-focused.

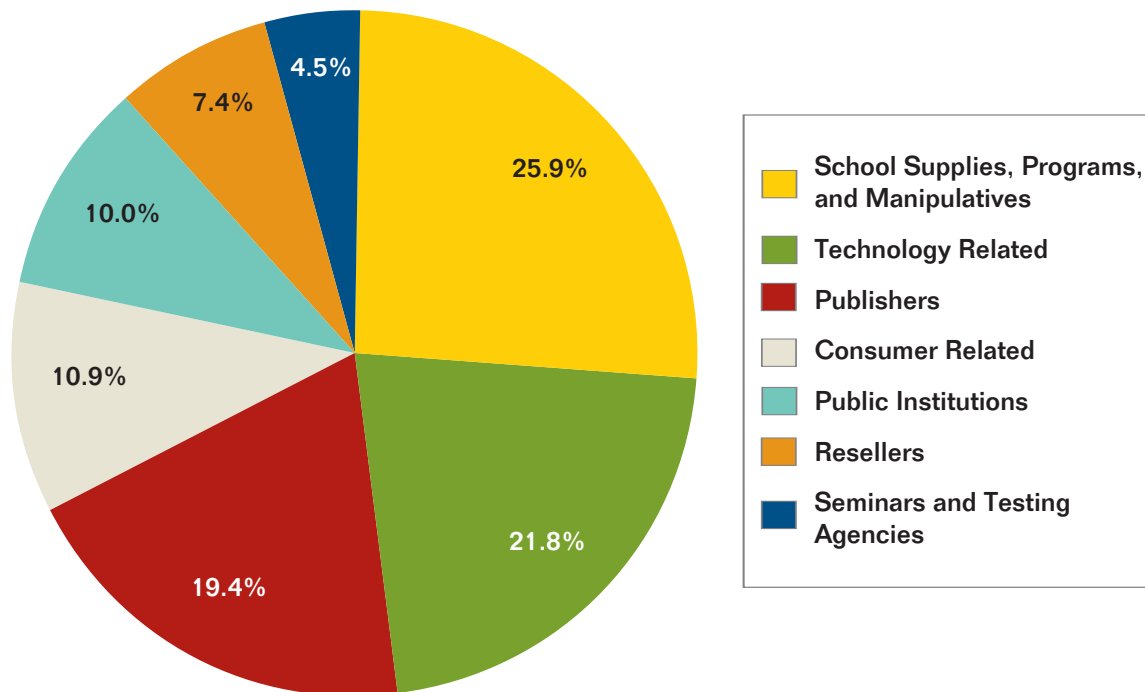
Public Institutions. This category includes education institutions (primarily postsecondary institutions), associations and non-profit organizations, and government agencies.

Seminars and Testing Agencies. These are companies that provide professional development and training, as well as testing organizations and companies.

Size and Other Characteristics of Email Campaigns

Companies selling school supplies, programs, and manipulatives sent the largest number of emails during the year (accounting for nearly 26% of all prospecting emails), followed closely by technology-related companies (with nearly 22% of the total) and publishers (at 19.4%).

► **CHART 1.6** Percentage of Total 2007 Prospecting Emails Sent by Company Type



The different types of companies approach their email campaigns in different ways. In general, public institutions; companies that sell consumer-related products and services; and those that sell school supplies, programs, and manipulatives send larger campaigns than other types of companies—with each deploying campaigns that average more than 10,000 emails. As a group, publishers sent considerable fewer emails, with an average of 4,341 emails per campaign. As was illustrated, the companies that launched smaller campaigns tended to have higher Open and Click-Through rates than the larger campaigns.

► **TABLE 1.3** Average Prospecting Campaign Size and Open and Click-Through Rates by Company Type

Company Type	Average Size of Campaign	% of Average Open Rates	% of Average Click-Through Rates
Public Institutions	11,018	13.2	2.4
Consumer Related	10,969	12.8	1.9
School Supplies, Programs, and Manipulatives	10,734	13.5	2.8
Technology Related	8,562	13.2	2.1
Seminars and Testing Agencies	7,769	15.4	2.7
Resellers	7,322	14.4	2.6
Publishers	4,341	17.2	4.1

Within each company type, however, there are considerable variations in terms of campaign size and effectiveness as measured by Open rates. All types of companies deployed both very large and very small campaigns, and all experienced both very high and very low Open rates. And while the general rule that large campaigns tend to have lower Open rates holds for all types of companies, many companies deliberately choose larger campaigns with the knowledge that even a relatively low Open rate on a larger base will yield a significant number of readers. For example, one technology-related company sent about 94,000 emails and received an 11% Open rate, resulting in more than 10,000 educators seeing at least the first page of their message.

► **TABLE 1.4** Highest and Lowest 2007 Prospecting Campaign Size and Open Rates

Company Type	Number of Emails Sent		% of Open Rates	
	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
Consumer Related	153,297	117	32.0	0.1
Public Institutions	237,390	166	54.8	1.4
Publishers	109,113	101	47.8	0.1
Resellers	113,296	144	41.6	2.2
School Supplies, Programs, and Manipulatives	216,006	108	54.1	0.5
Seminars and Testing Agencies	90,536	186	34.0	5.2
Technology Related	149,338	108	31.7	0.5

Click-Through rates also varied considerably, with one company in the Public Institution category recording a 75% Click-Through rate and a publishing company with a 52% Click-Through rate. At the other end of the scale, there were campaigns by all types of companies with no recorded Click-Throughs.

Time of Year Prospecting Campaigns Sent to the Education Market

Although email campaigns to educators are deployed throughout the year, there are two primary windows when the majority of campaigns are launched:

- ▶ February through May (accounting for 45% of all campaigns)
- ▶ September through November (accounting for 32%)

This reflects the basic purchasing cycle that generally begins with educators exploring new products and services in the fall and making purchasing decisions for the upcoming year during the spring. However, because some budgets are allocated throughout the year or are not completely depleted toward the end of the year, the spring window is used to tap into remaining funds for the current year, as well as to begin marketing activities for the next school year.

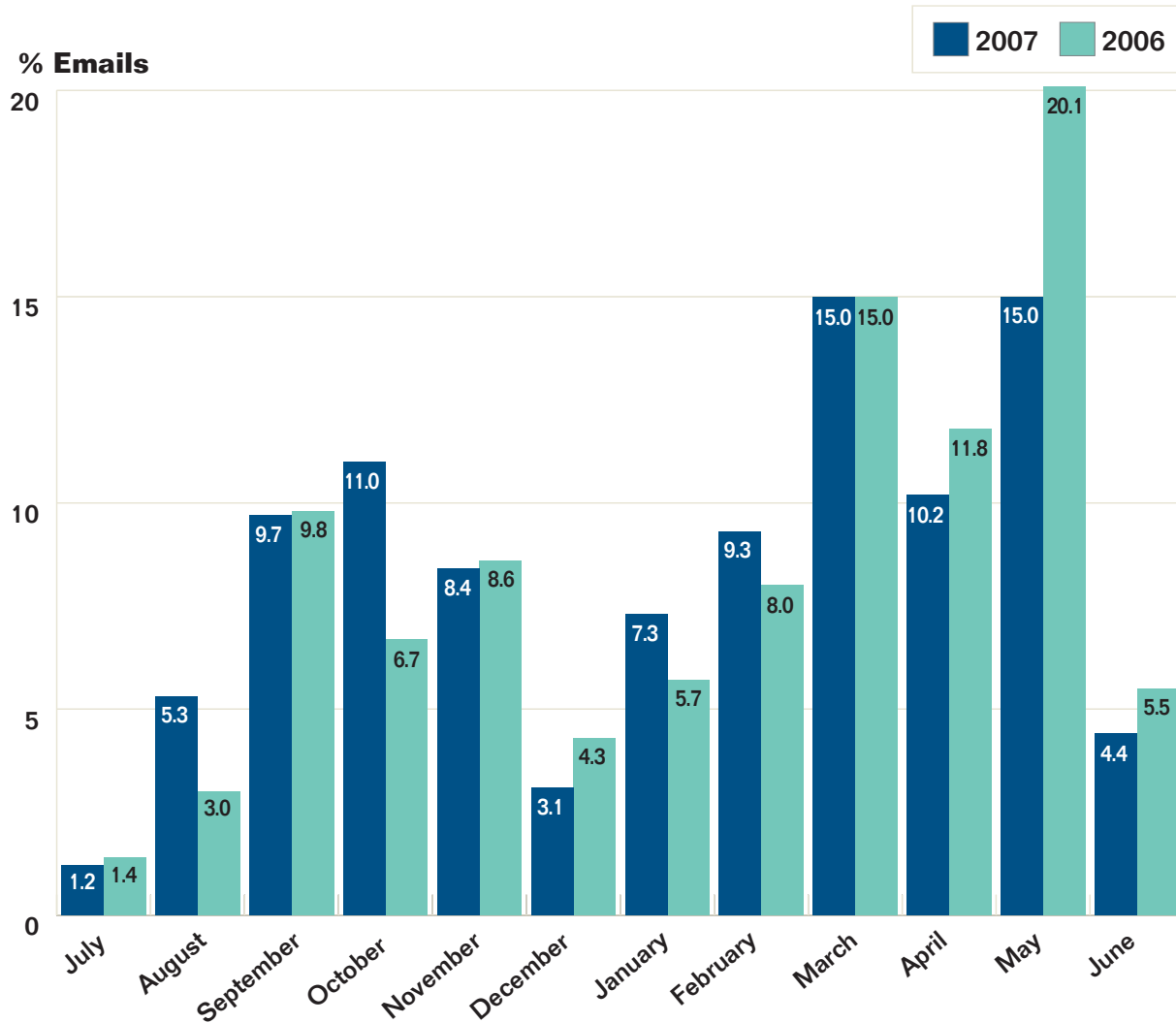
The month with the largest number of campaigns was March, followed by October and May. Although July saw the fewest number of campaigns, marketers began to use the summer more frequently than they had in the past.

▶ **TABLE 1.5** Number of Prospecting Campaigns by Month

Month	Number of Campaigns
July	46
August	183
September	386
October	472
November	341
December	124
January	312
February	409
March	482
April	392
May	427
June	185

When the total number of emails sent is examined, March and May stand out as the busiest months. These two months account for 30% of the individual emails sent during 2006-2007. The months with the lowest percentage of individual emails sent were July and December.

► **CHART 1.7** Percentage of Prospecting Emails Sent by Month
2007 and 2006



While there are definite similarities over the past two years, the percentage of emails sent in May 2007 was considerably lower than May 2006. On the other hand, a higher percentage of emails were sent during 2006-2007 earlier in the school year, particularly in October and to a lesser extent in August, January, and February. Whether these differences simply reflect normal variations or whether they suggest a trend toward spreading email marketing efforts more evenly across the academic calendar remains to be seen.

The popularity of May and March is also evident when looking at the average number of emails per campaign by month.

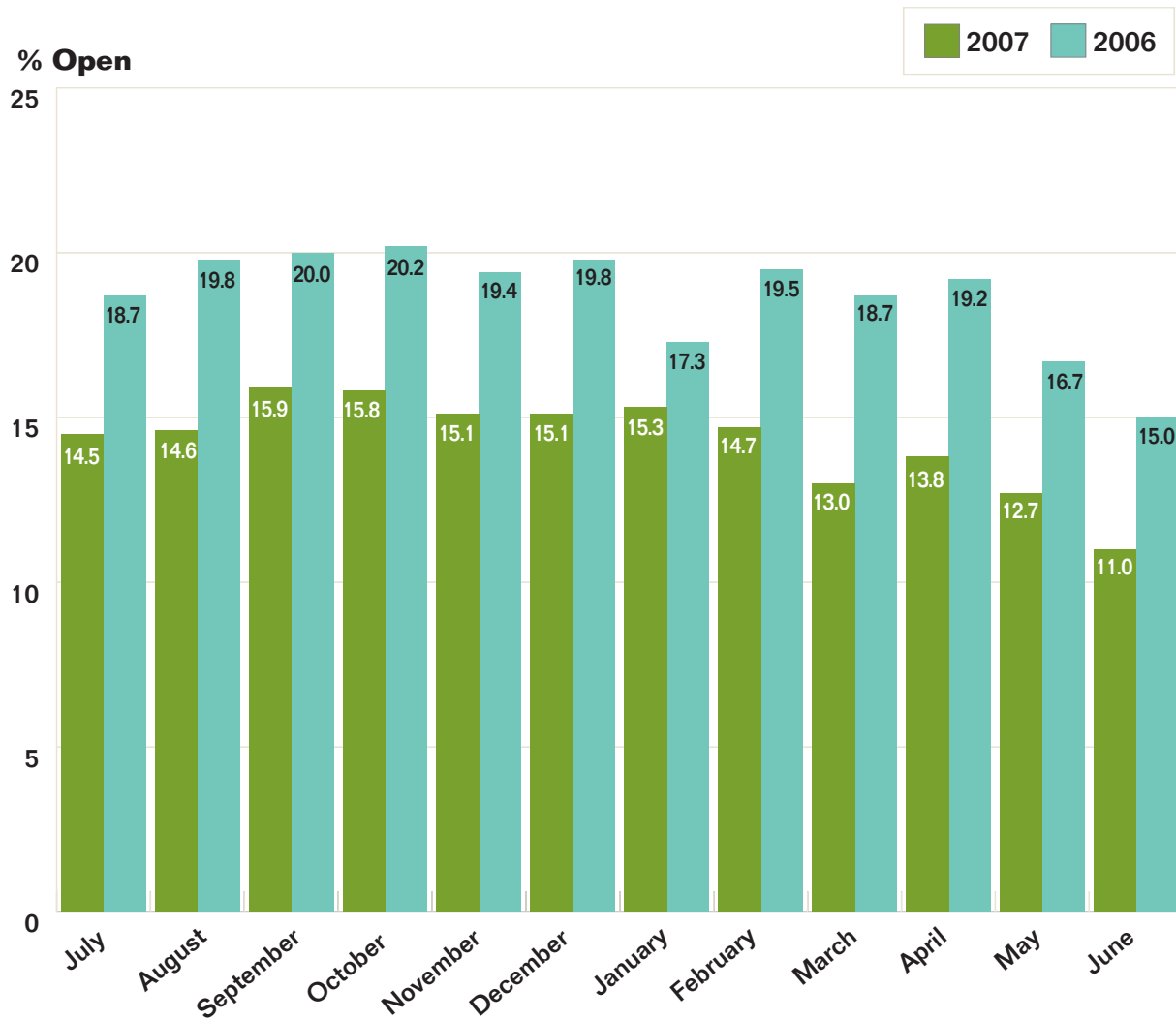
► **TABLE 1.6** Average Number of Emails Sent by Month

Month	Average Emails Per Campaign
May	10,233
March	9,034
August	8,440
April	7,577
July	7,500
September	7,320
December	7,200
November	7,162
June	6,936
January	6,842
October	6,790
February	6,580

There are some interesting differences in time of year deployment by market. For example, publishers sent nearly 20% of their emails in October, followed by 14% in February. Technology-related companies deployed 22% of their emails in May, followed by 18% in March. Companies selling school supplies, programs, and manipulatives are heavily represented in February, March, and April, with these three months accounting for 43% of the total emails sent by this group of companies. Nearly one-third of the emails about consumer-related products were launched in August and September.

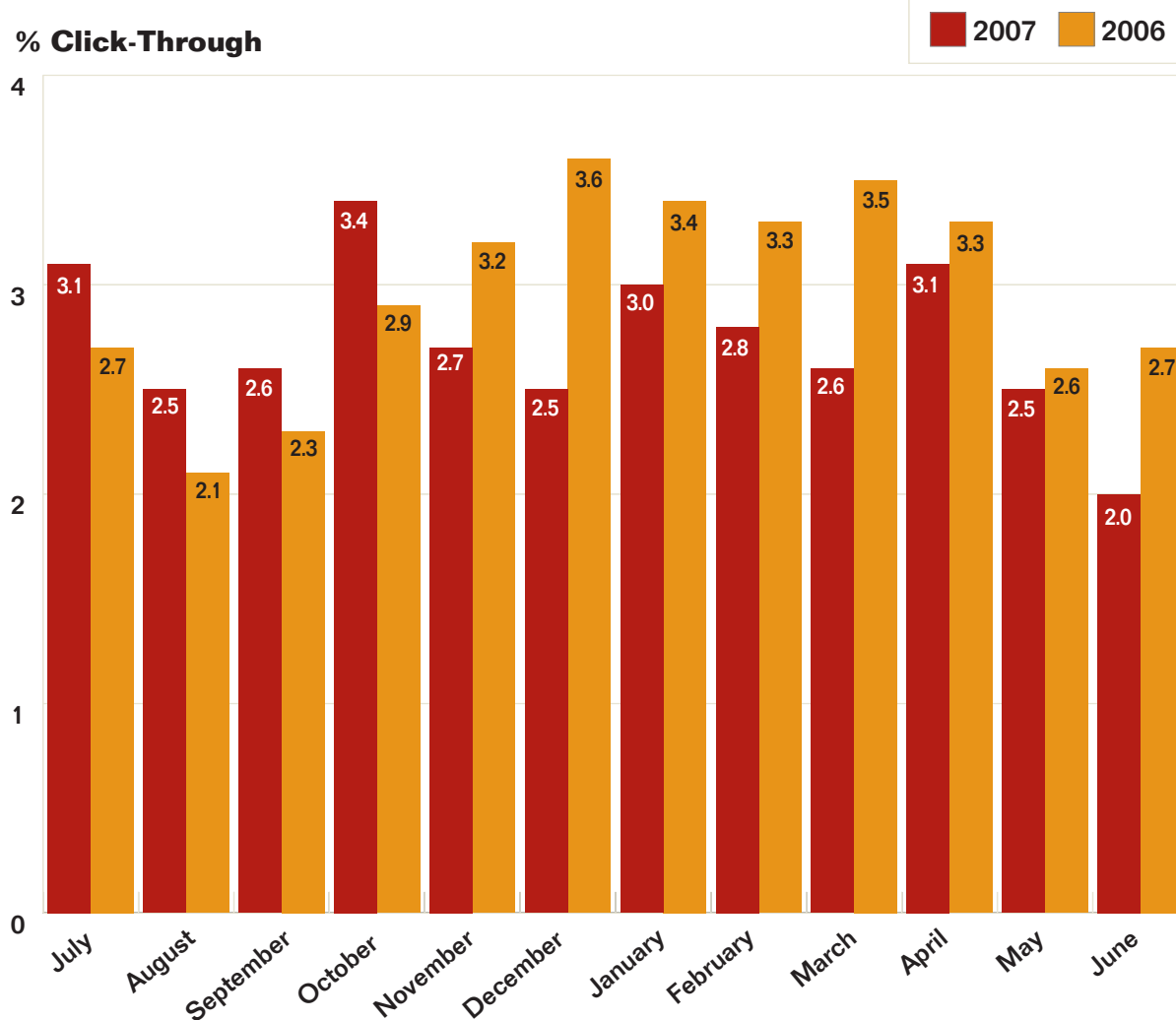
As we have seen earlier, average Open rates for 2007 are about 4 percentage points lower than in 2006; however, the pattern of Open rates by month shows some interesting differences. In 2007, Open rates tended to be higher in the fall and early winter and gradually tapered off during the spring and summer. By comparison, the monthly Open rates in 2006 were somewhat bimodal, with the highest occurring during August through December and a second high grouping occurring between February and April.

► **CHART 1.8** Open Rates of Prospecting Campaigns by Month
2007 and 2006



The erosion of average Click-Through rates in 2007 compared with 2006 was not as great as in average Open rates, and overall, the difference was only 0.2 percentage points lower. However, this general pattern was reversed during July to October when Click-Through rates were actually higher than the prior year. In fact, October was the month with the highest Click-Through rate (3.4%) during 2007. The months with the next highest Click-Through rates were April, July, and January (at 3.1%, 3.1%, and 3.0%, respectively). During 2006, the months with the highest open rates were December (3.6%), March (3.5%), January (3.4%), February and April (both at 3.3%).

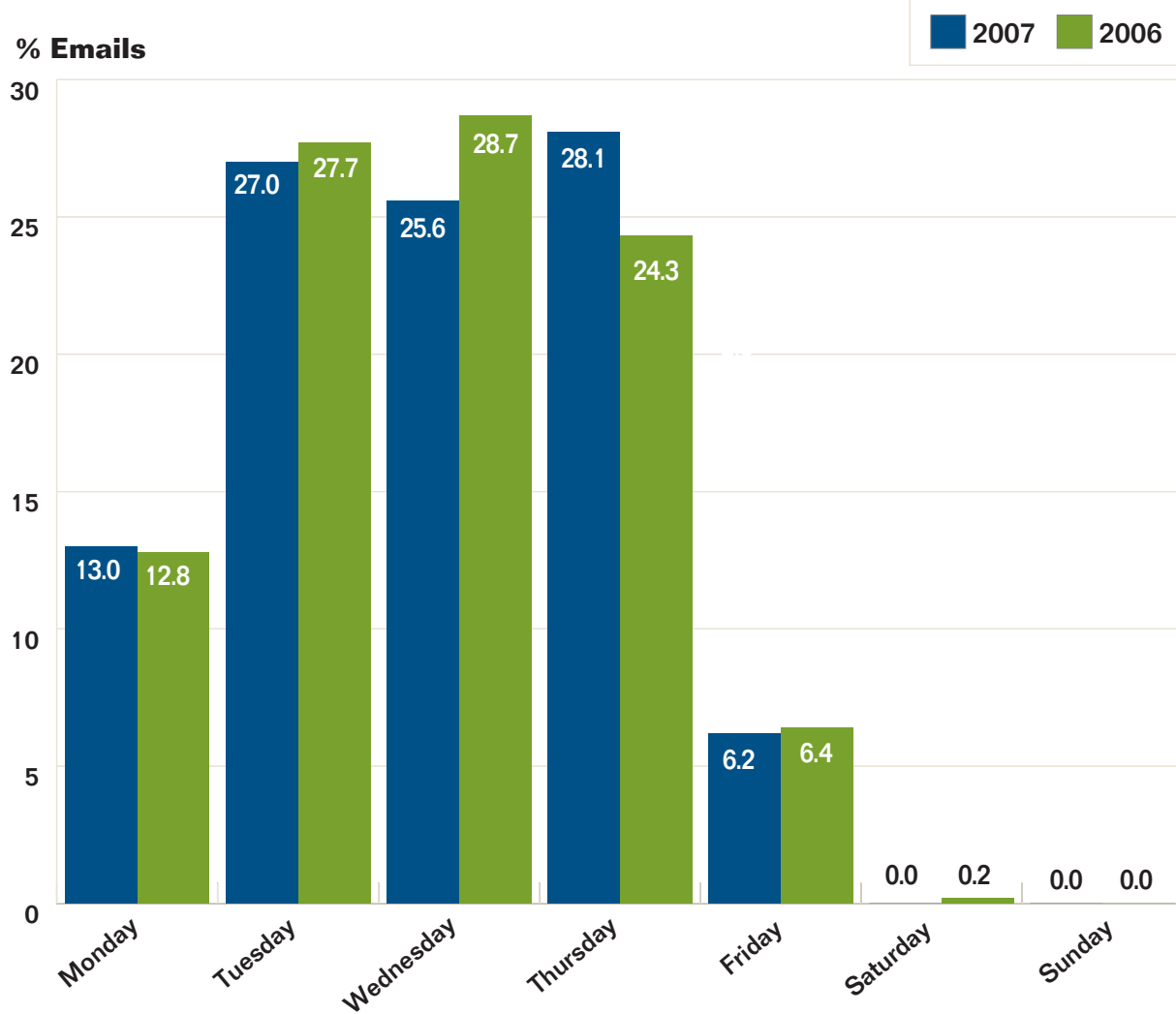
► **CHART 1.9** Click-Through Rates of Prospecting Campaigns by Month
2007 and 2006



Day of the Week Email Campaigns Sent to the Education Market

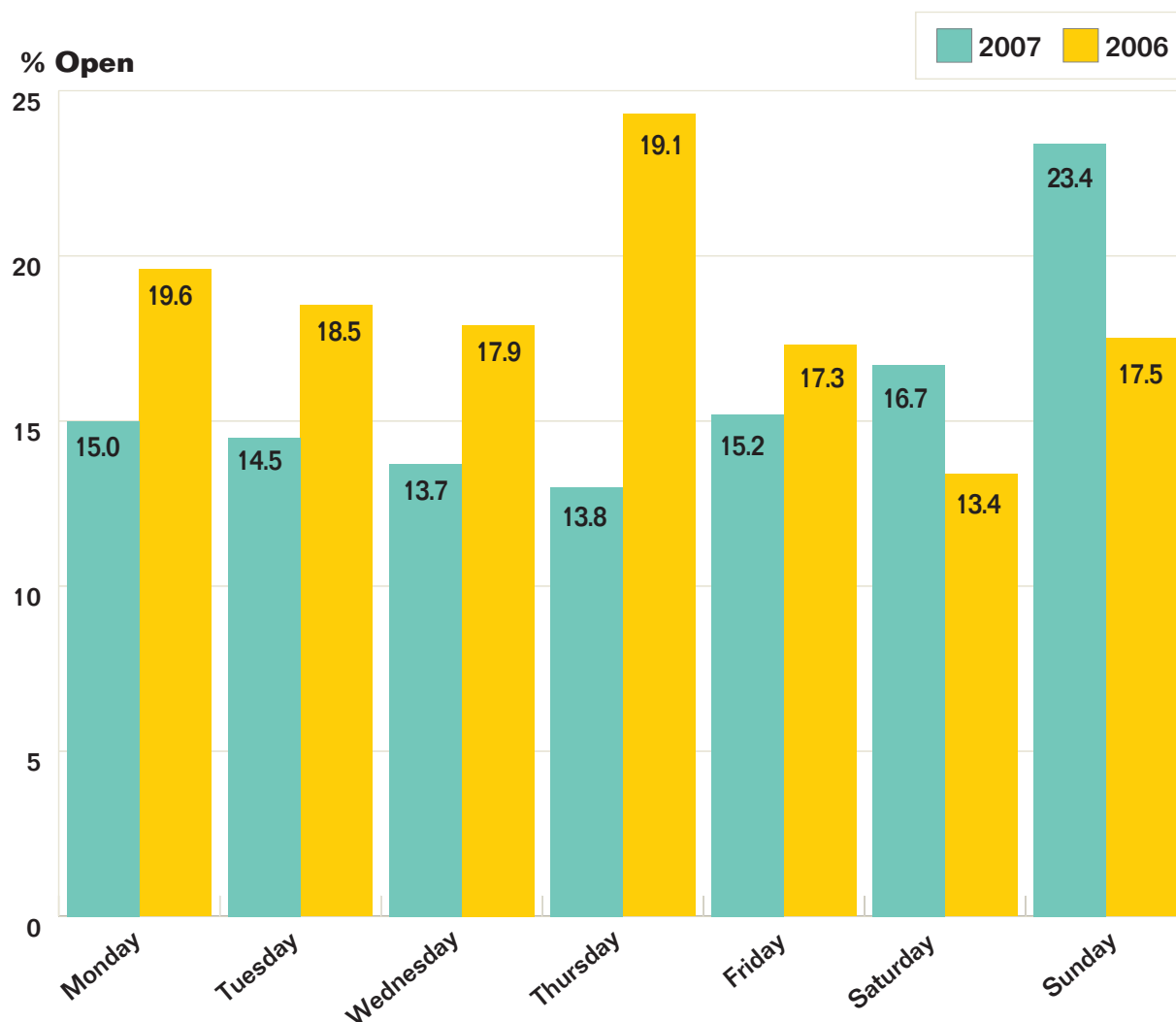
Virtually all emails are deployed during the workweek, with four out of five sent on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. The pattern of email deployment has remained relatively stable over the past two years, with just slightly more emails delivered on Thursday in 2007 compared with 2006. Possibly this shift is related to the fact that some marketers acted on information in last year's report on email trends, showing that Thursday had the highest Open and Click-Through rates.

► **CHART 1.10** Percentage of Emails Delivered by Day of Week
2007 and 2006



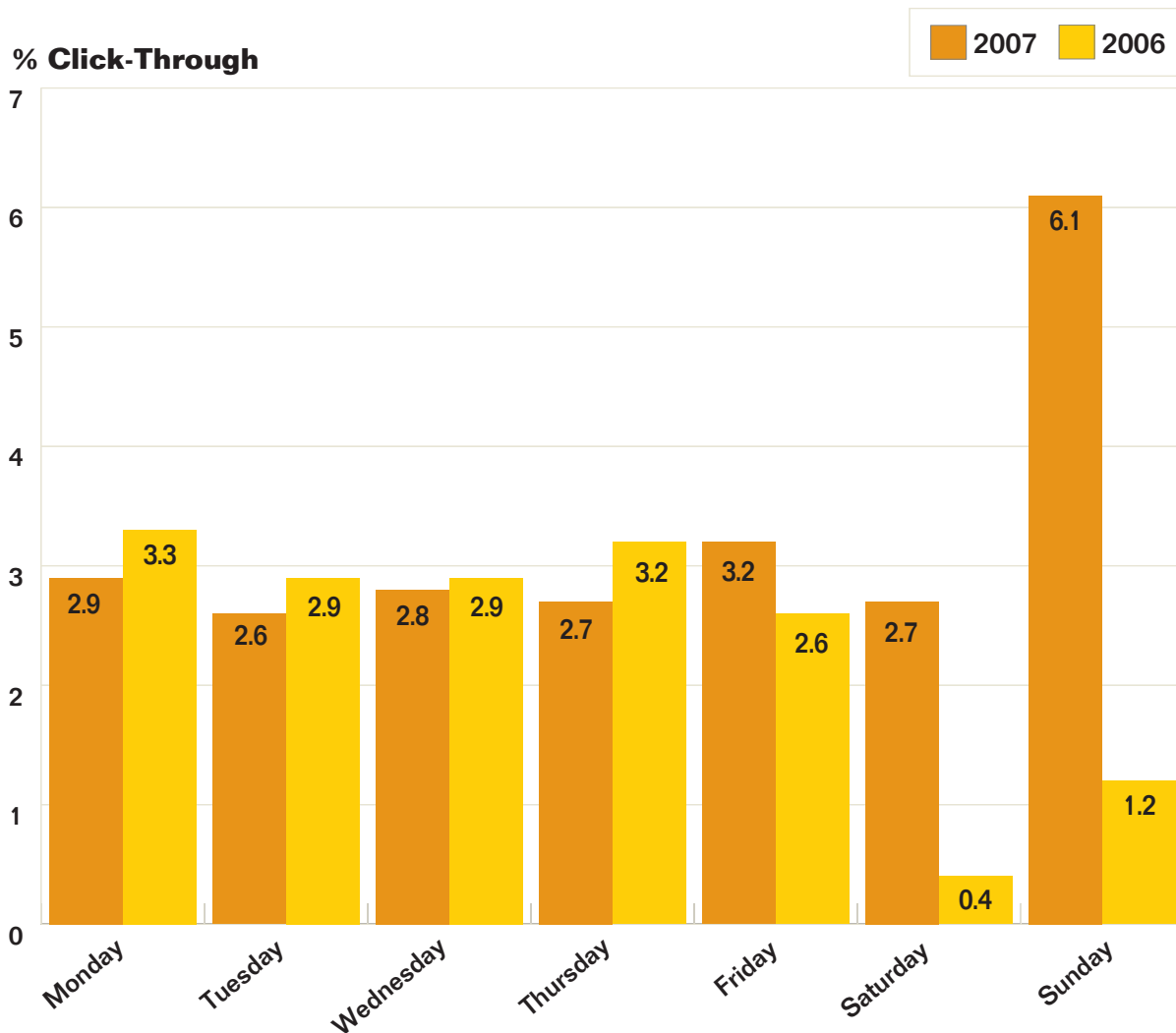
In 2007, the weekdays with the highest Open rates were Friday and Monday. By contrast, in 2006, the highest weekday Open rates were Monday and Thursday. Although it's tempting to infer from Chart 1.11 that Sunday deployment might be the most effective day in terms of Open rates, this information should be interpreted with caution since there were only three different campaigns launched on Sunday during 2007.

► **CHART 1.11** Average Open Rates by Day of Week



For the past two years, Click-Through rates have shown relatively little variation during workdays. As we have seen throughout this report, Click-Through rates were generally lower in 2007 compared with 2006. One exception is the average Click-Through rates for Friday, which was 3.2% in 2007 and only 2.6% in 2006. Perhaps this is because the relatively few campaigns launched on Friday were particularly effective in capturing recipients' attention or possibly due to recipients having more time over the weekend to peruse their email.

► **CHART 1.12** Average Click-Through Rates by Day of Week



What Are the Characteristics of Campaigns With Extremely High Open Rates?

There were 428 campaigns launched during 2007 that yielded Open rates of 25% or higher. The average number of emails for these 428 campaigns was considerably lower than for the total group (2,132 for the high Open rate group, compared with 7,730 for all campaigns). While all market categories are represented within this group, the majority (62%) were publishers, primarily of college-level textbooks, and most of these campaigns were highly segmented. This group of campaigns also differs from all 2007 campaigns in terms of their chosen day for mailing. Nearly one-fourth (24.7%) launched on Monday (compared with only 13.0% overall) and fewer (18.5%) were sent on Thursday (compared with 28.1% for the total group).

Lessons Learned From 2007 Prospecting Campaigns

Many different types of companies utilize e-marketing to reach the education market, including not only the traditional marketers of educational products and services (such as publishers and providers of school supplies and supplemental curricular materials) but also companies with technology and consumer-related products. This summary of the characteristics of 2007 prospecting campaigns illustrates the many different approaches to designing and deploying email that education marketers can employ. Campaign size ranged from very small (about 100 emails) to quite large (more than 20,000). Email campaigns are launched every month of the year and every day of the week.

Results as measured by Open and Click-Through rates also vary widely, with some highly segmented and relevant campaigns achieving very high Open and Click-Through rates. On average, Click-Through rates are down slightly. This may be due in part to the increased amount of email that educators are getting, combined with the entry of many new education marketers that may not be utilizing the best mail marketing practices yet. Again this year, we have seen the continued decline in Open rates, which can be attributed to the further reach of the Outlook 2003 image suppression issue, as the decline in Open rates far outpaced the much more modest decline in Click-Through rates. As noted on page 14, the traditional measures of Open rates no longer capture accurate data on actual readers' views of email and understate the percentage of readers who have been messaged by the campaign.

There are no hard-and-fast rules about the best approaches to all email campaigns since campaign objectives and the unique characteristics of companies vary considerably. However, data in this chapter suggest several strategies that education marketers might consider in designing future email deployments. Perhaps the single most striking finding from the analysis of all 2007 prospecting campaigns is the very strong, positive relationship between size of campaign and Open and Click-Through rates. Smaller targeted campaigns tend to yield better results than larger campaigns.

In terms of timing, March and May are the most popular months for deployment to take advantage of unspent end-of-year budgets as well as to begin positioning for the upcoming school year purchases. The fall (September through November) represents a second major window for deploying emails. However, in terms of Opens and Click-Throughs, the fall and winter rates are somewhat higher than those recorded in the spring. Most emails were sent midweek (Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday).

▼ CHAPTER 2

Customer Email Campaigns 2006-2007

Overview

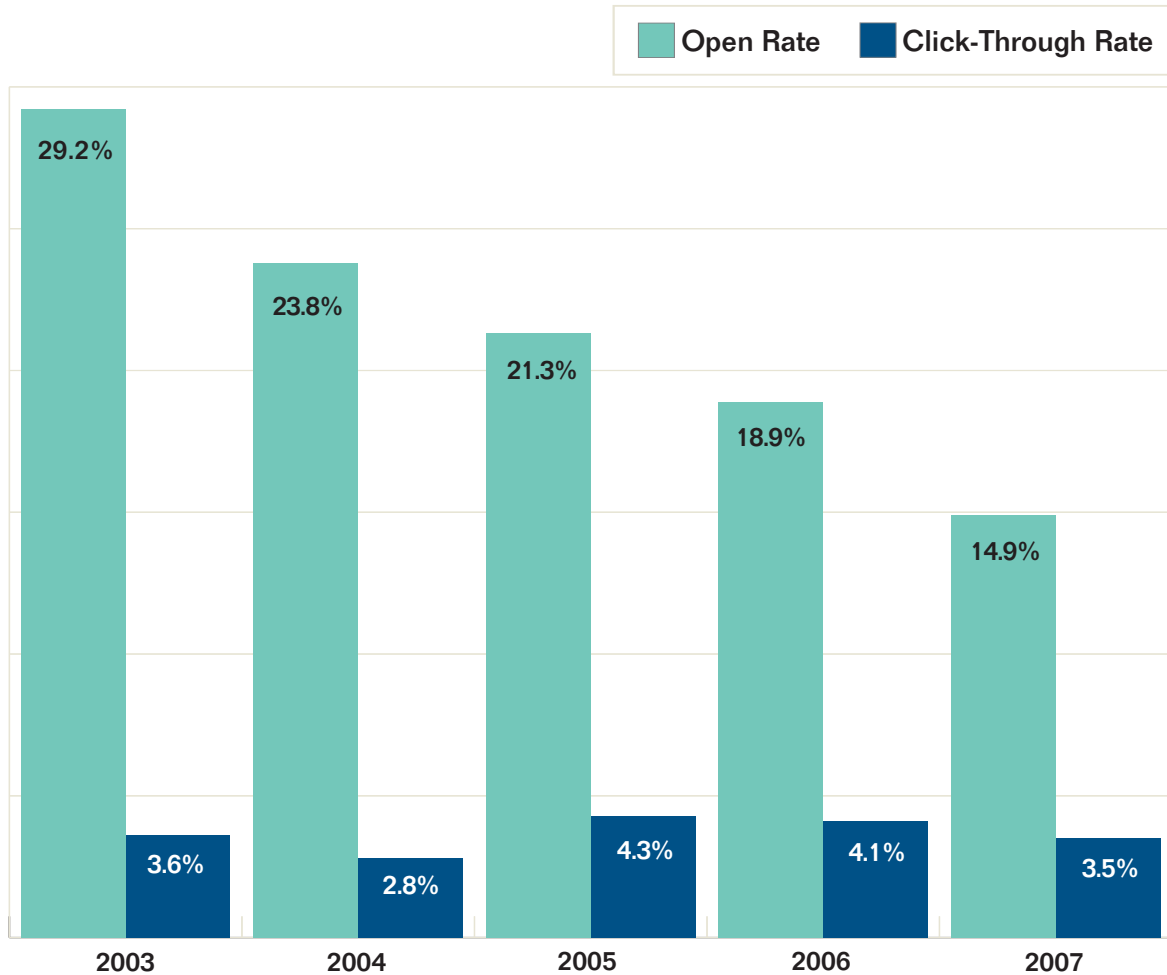
In addition to making available email lists of prospective customers, MDR also provides a specialized service that helps education marketers build their customer email address files. Starting with the client-provided customer list, MDR appends email addresses and manages and deploys an initial email campaign on behalf of the company or organization. This chapter summarizes these initial customer email campaigns deployed by MDR. (Additional customer email campaigns that may have been deployed independently by MDR clients are not included in this report.) Comparisons with results from prior years' customer campaigns as well as with prospecting campaigns are included.

Summary of the School Year 2006-2007

Companies deployed 219 customer email campaigns through MDR during July 1, 2006, and June 30, 2007, a 42% increase over 2005-2006. During the same period, the total number of emails delivered nearly doubled. Clearly, education marketers are focusing increased attention on utilizing e-marketing approaches with their existing customer base.

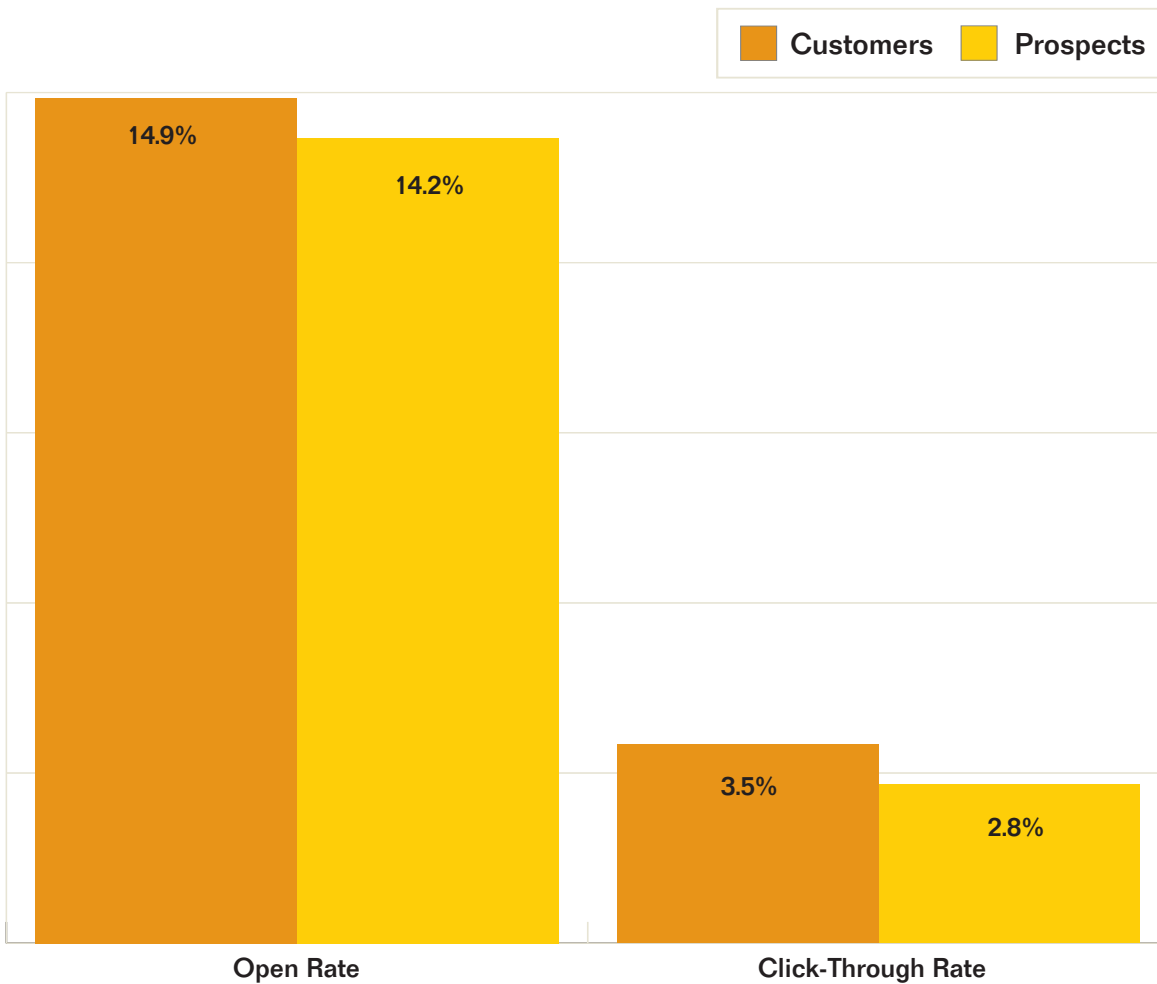
The average Open rate for these customer campaigns was 14.9% (compared with 18.9% in 2006), and the average Click-Through rate was 3.5% (compared with 4.1% last year). As noted at the beginning of Chapter 1, the widespread use of Outlook 2003 and other efforts to combat viruses and spam have resulted in lower-tracked Open rates in recent years. Thus, the actual number of opened emails is undoubtedly higher than indicated by these reported Open rates. In addition, comparative data between 2007 and 2006 are somewhat misleading because of the fact that the most recent year included a number of large campaigns. These campaigns tend to have lower Open and Click-Through rates, which therefore bring down the overall average for the year. In 2006, the largest campaign deployed was 19,637. In 2007, there were 11 separate campaigns over 20,000. When the 2007 average is computed on the basis of the 208 campaigns of similar size to the 2006 campaigns (including only those campaigns under 20,000), the average Open rate for 2007 rises to 16.8%, and the average Click-Through rate is 7.6%.

► **CHART 2.1** Open and Click-Through Rates of Customer Campaigns, Five-Year Comparison



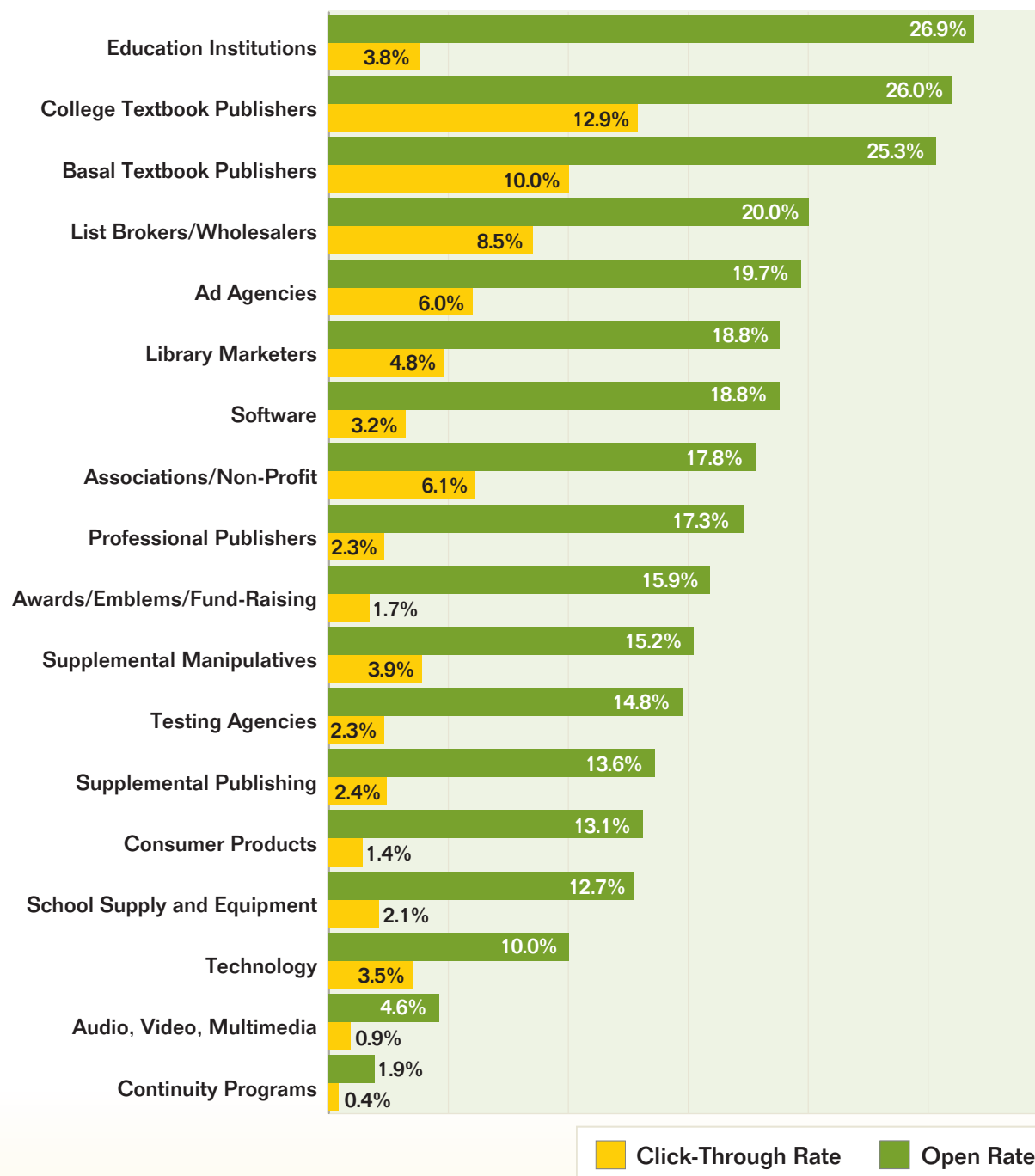
The following chart compares the average Open and Click-Through rates for the 2007 customer campaigns, with data about the 2007 prospecting campaigns described in Chapter 1. Not surprisingly, the Open rate for customer campaigns was higher than that for prospecting campaigns (14.9% compared with 14.2%). The Click-Through rate was also higher for customer campaigns (3.5% compared with 2.8%). The increased attention to these customer emails is what one would expect since recipients already are familiar with the sender, and many presumably have positive associations with the products and services of these companies.

► **CHART 2.2** 2007 Customer and Prospecting Open and Click-Through Rates



As was seen in prospecting campaigns, different industries have, on average, vastly different Open and Click-Through rates. Education institutions, college textbook publishers, and basal textbook publishers all have average Open rates over 25%.

► **CHART 2.3** Average Open and Click-Through Rates of 2007 Customer Campaigns by Industry

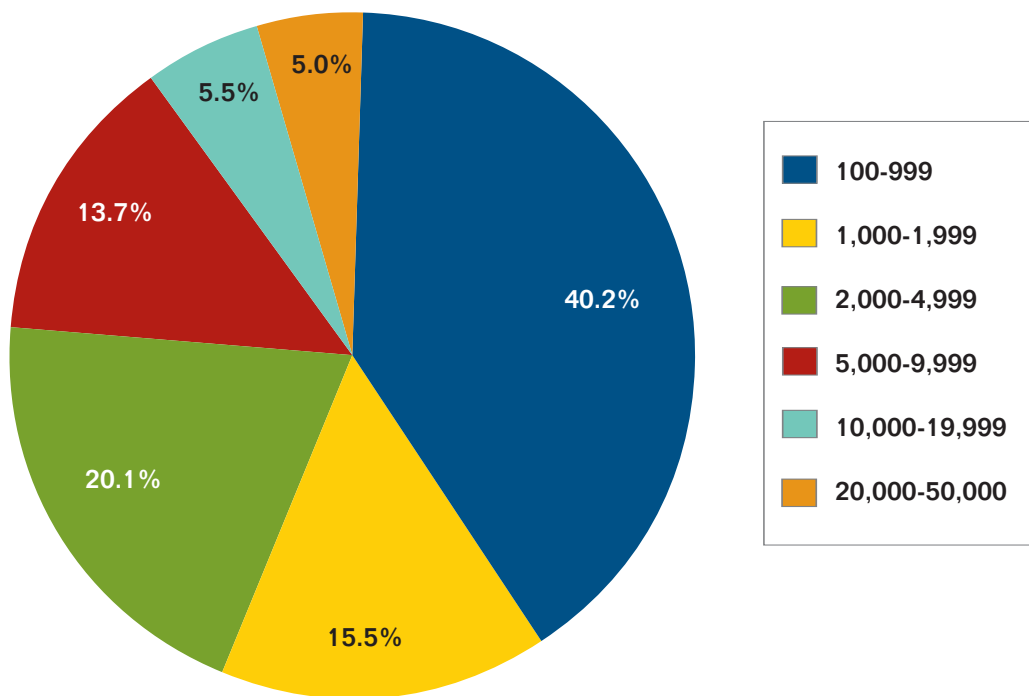


There were 33 customer campaigns directed exclusively to the higher education market. These higher education campaigns yielded average Open and Click-Through rates of 23.0% and 8.7%, respectively—considerably higher than the overall averages. In fact, some of these campaigns had the highest Open rates (with several over 40%) and Click-Through rates (several over 20%) of all customer campaigns.

Campaign Size

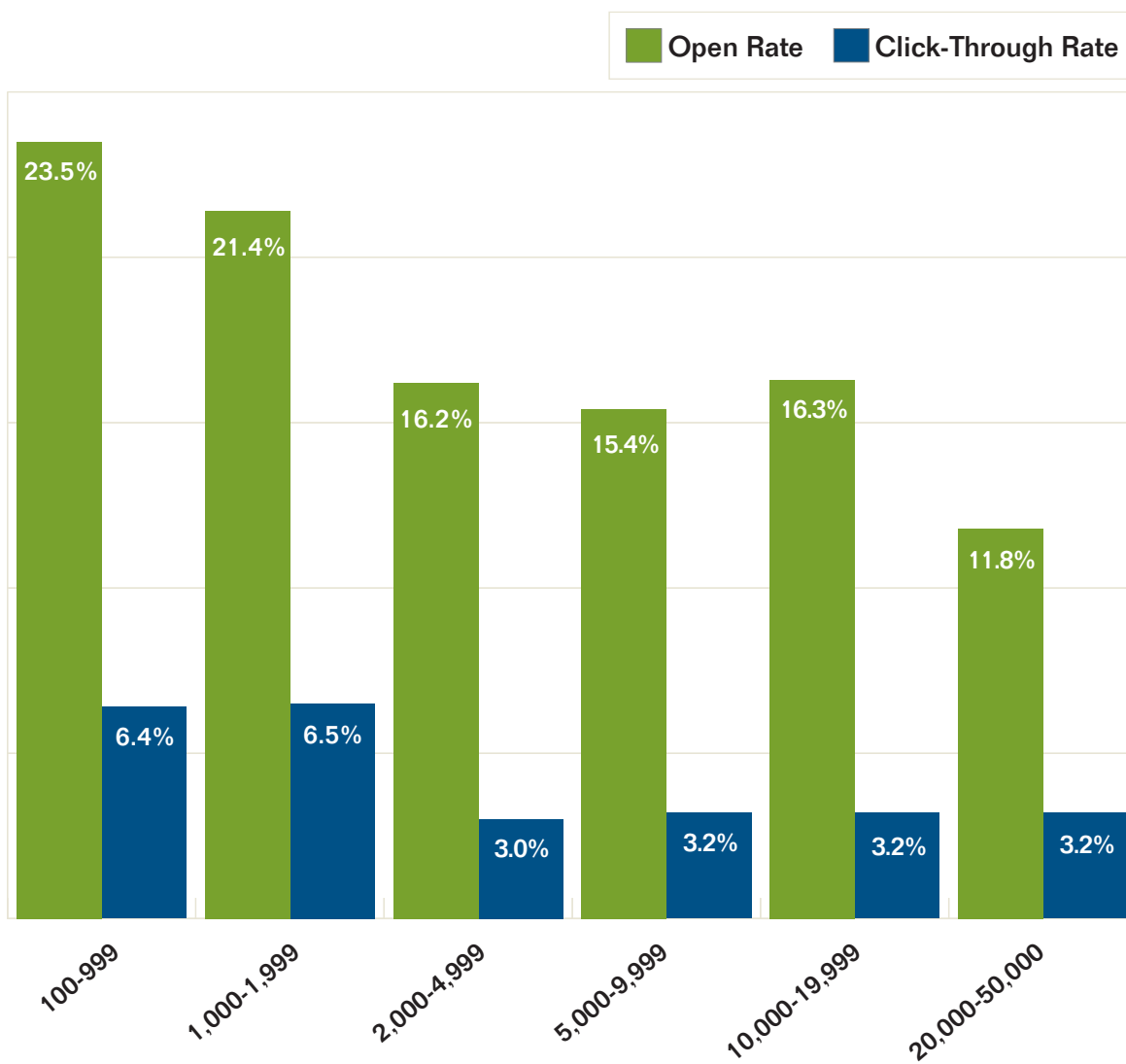
In general, customer campaigns tended to be smaller than prospecting campaigns. The average (arithmetic mean) number of emails delivered through customer campaigns was 4,554, compared with 7,730 for prospecting campaigns. However, because of a handful of relatively large customer campaigns, the differences in size are more meaningfully revealed by examining the median size of each type of campaign. The median number of emails deployed was 1,602 for customer campaigns and 3,084 for prospecting campaigns. Two out of every five customer campaigns were under 1,000 in size, compared with only 18% in this size group for the prospecting campaigns.

► CHART 2.4 Percentage of Customer Campaigns by Size



As we have seen throughout this report, there is a very strong relationship between size of campaign and Open and Click-Through rates. The smaller the campaign, the more successful it's in terms of measured Open and Click-Through rates. Campaigns delivered to 100 to 999 educators recorded a remarkable average Open rate of 23.5% and 6.4% Click-Through rate. By contrast, the largest campaigns (with 20,000 or more emails delivered) drew Open and Click-Through rates of only 11.8% and 3.2%, respectively.

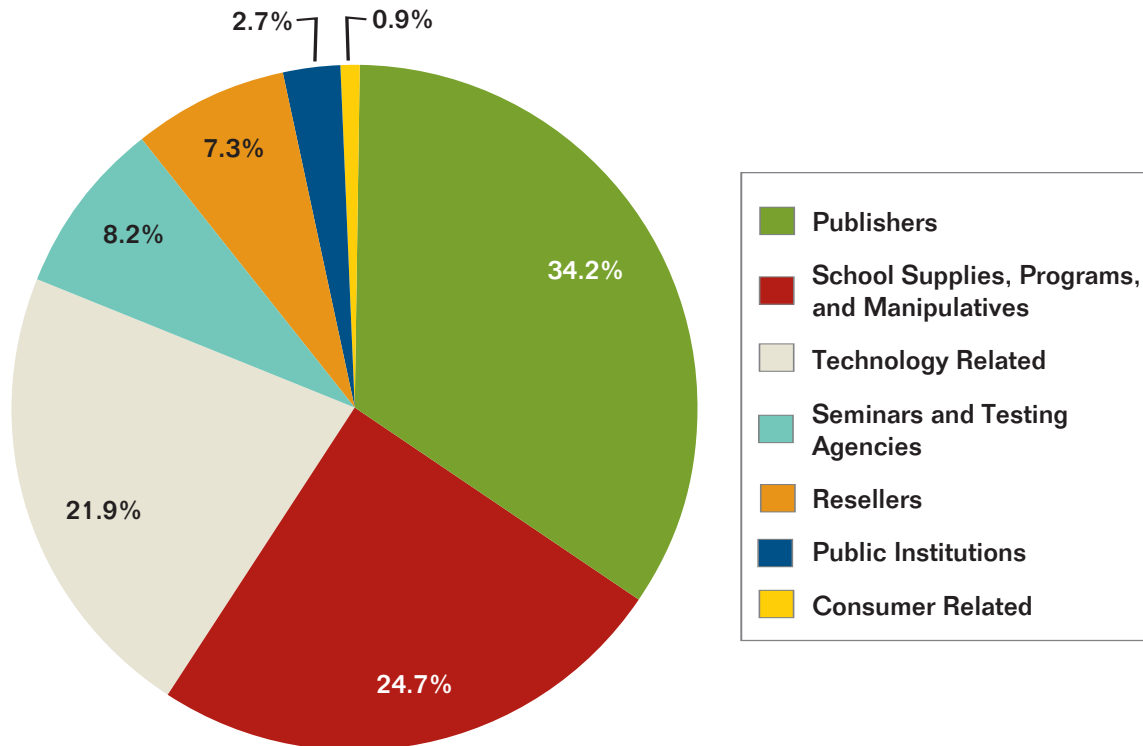
▶ **CHART 2.5** Open and Click-Through Rates by Size of Customer Campaign



Types of Companies Sending Customer Emails

Publishers deployed the largest number of customer email campaigns and accounted for 34.2% of the total. (Publishers also topped the list for prospecting campaigns.) Companies that sell school supplies, programs, and manipulatives deployed the next largest group of campaigns (24.7%), followed closely by technology-related companies (21.9%).

► CHART 2.6 Percentage of Campaigns Deployed by Company Type



Size and Other Characteristics of Email Campaigns

Companies selling school supplies, programs, and manipulatives deployed the largest average number of emails per campaign, followed closely by technology-related companies and the seminar and testing agency company type. Although publishers launched the largest number of campaigns, these tended to be considerably smaller, on average, than most other customer types.

► **TABLE 2.1** Summary of Customer Campaigns by Company Type

Company Type	Number of Campaigns	Average Size of Campaign
School Supplies, Programs, and Manipulatives	54	6,349
Technology Related	48	5,774
Seminars and Testing Agencies	18	5,458
Resellers	16	3,431
Public Institutions	6	3,175
Publishers	75	2,702
Consumer Related	2	1,208

Resellers and publishers had the highest average Open rates (20.0% and 19.9%, respectively). However, even within these two groups, there were large differences—Open rates ranged from a high of 48.9% to a low of 6.0%. The larger campaigns launched by companies selling school supplies, programs, and manipulatives yielded predictably the lowest average open rates, although this group of companies also saw wide fluctuations.

► **TABLE 2.2** Open Rates by Company Type

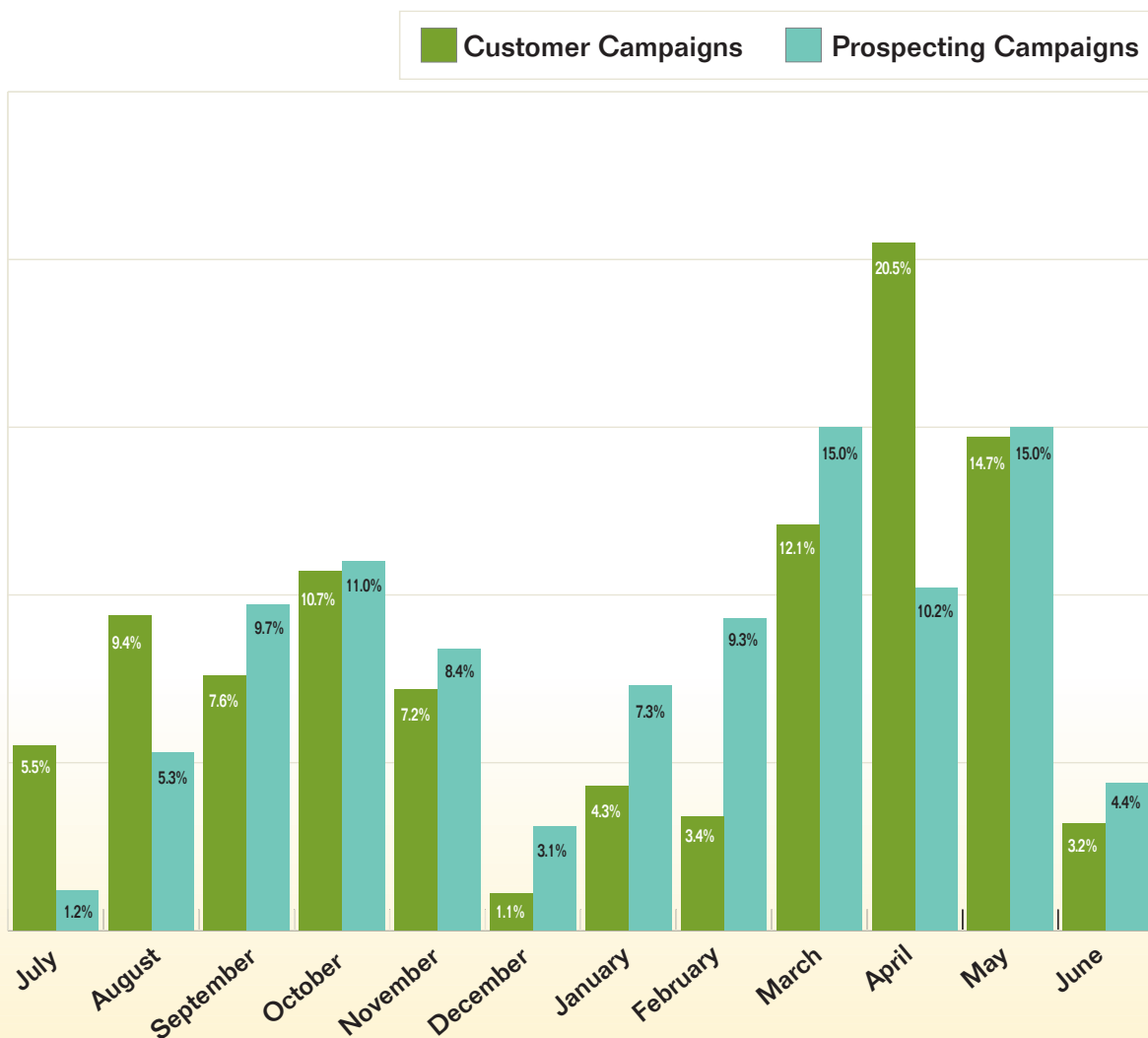
Company Type	% of Average Open Rates	% of Average Highest Open Rates	% of Average Lowest Open Rates
Resellers	20.0	48.9	13.1
Publishers	19.9	46.1	6.0
Public Institutions	18.0	35.8	12.8
Seminars and Testing Agencies	14.8	27.7	10.8
Consumer Related	13.1	27.8	10.0
Technology Related	12.7	45.3	1.4
School Supplies, Programs, and Manipulatives	12.7	35.7	1.9

Similarly, there was considerable variation in Click-Through rates, with resellers, public institutions, and publishers showing the highest average Click-Through rates (8.2%, 6.0, and 5.8%, respectively), but at least a few campaigns by all types of companies exceeded the overall average of 3.5%.

Time of Year Customer Email Campaigns Sent to the Education Market

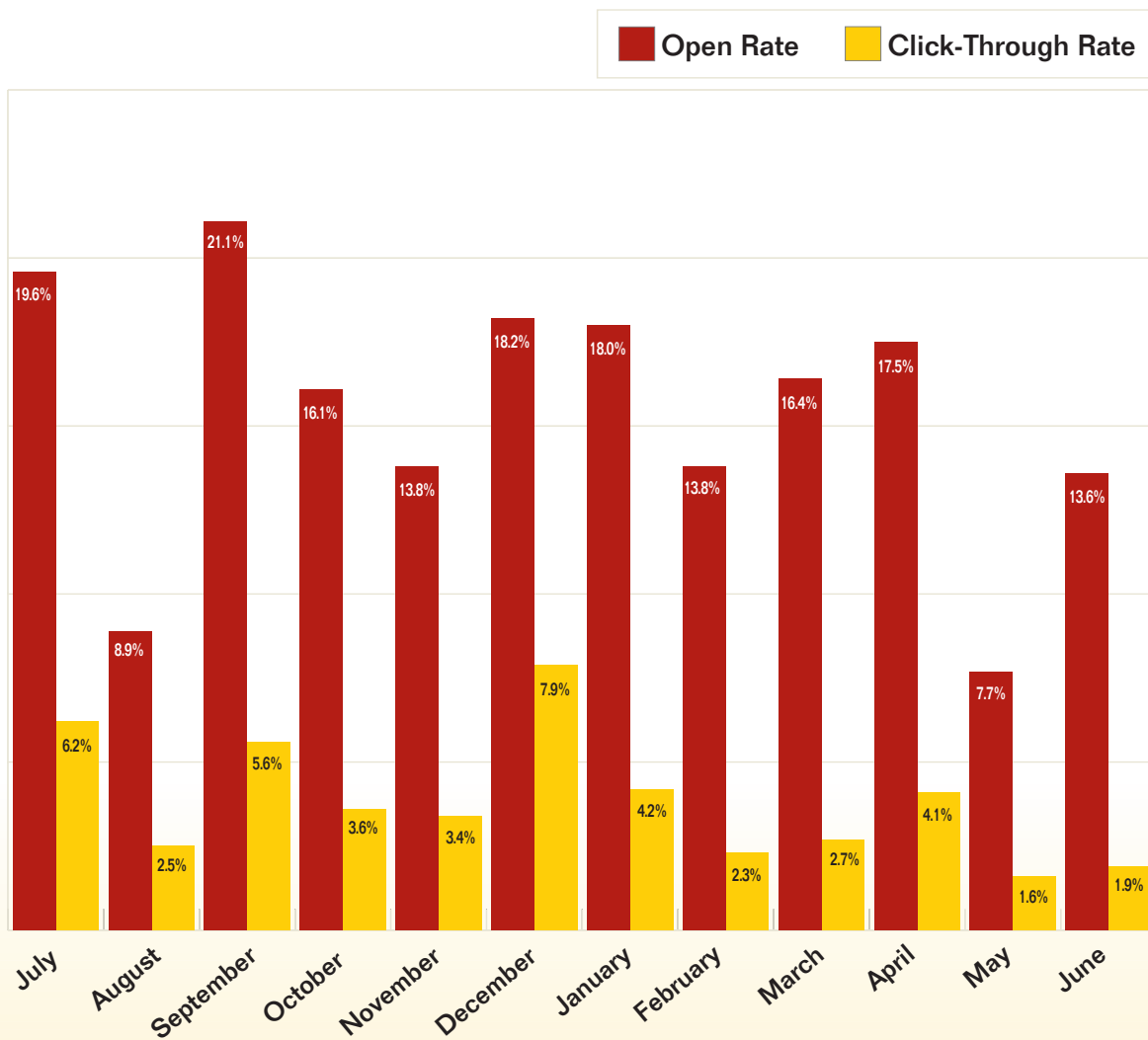
The most popular month for customer campaigns was April, which accounted for one in every five emails sent during the year. The next most popular months for customer emails were March and May. Taken together, emails sent during these three months accounted for nearly one-half of the total emails sent. While these three months were also popular months for prospecting emails, only 40% of those emails were sent during March, April, and May. In the fall, October saw the largest number of emails by both customer and prospecting campaigns. Customer campaigns were more likely to be deployed during the summer months (particularly July and August) than prospecting campaigns.

► **CHART 2.7** Percentage of Emails Sent to Customers and Prospects by Month



As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the overall average Open rate for 2007 customer campaigns is 14.9%. The Open rates in September, July, December, and January—four of the lower-volume months—exceeded the overall average by 3.1 to 6.2 percentage points. Three other months (October, March, and April) also exceeded the overall average. At the low end, the Open rate for May was 7.7 percentage points lower than the overall average. Click-Through rates followed the same general pattern. By contrast, prospecting campaigns did not show nearly as much variation in either Open or Click-Through rates on a month-to-month basis. One interesting anomaly in customers' responses to email compared with prospects is the relatively high Open and Click-Through rates in June and July. Possibly during summer vacations, recipients are more receptive to emails from companies with whom they have an established relationship than they are to prospecting emails that might come from companies with which they are less familiar.

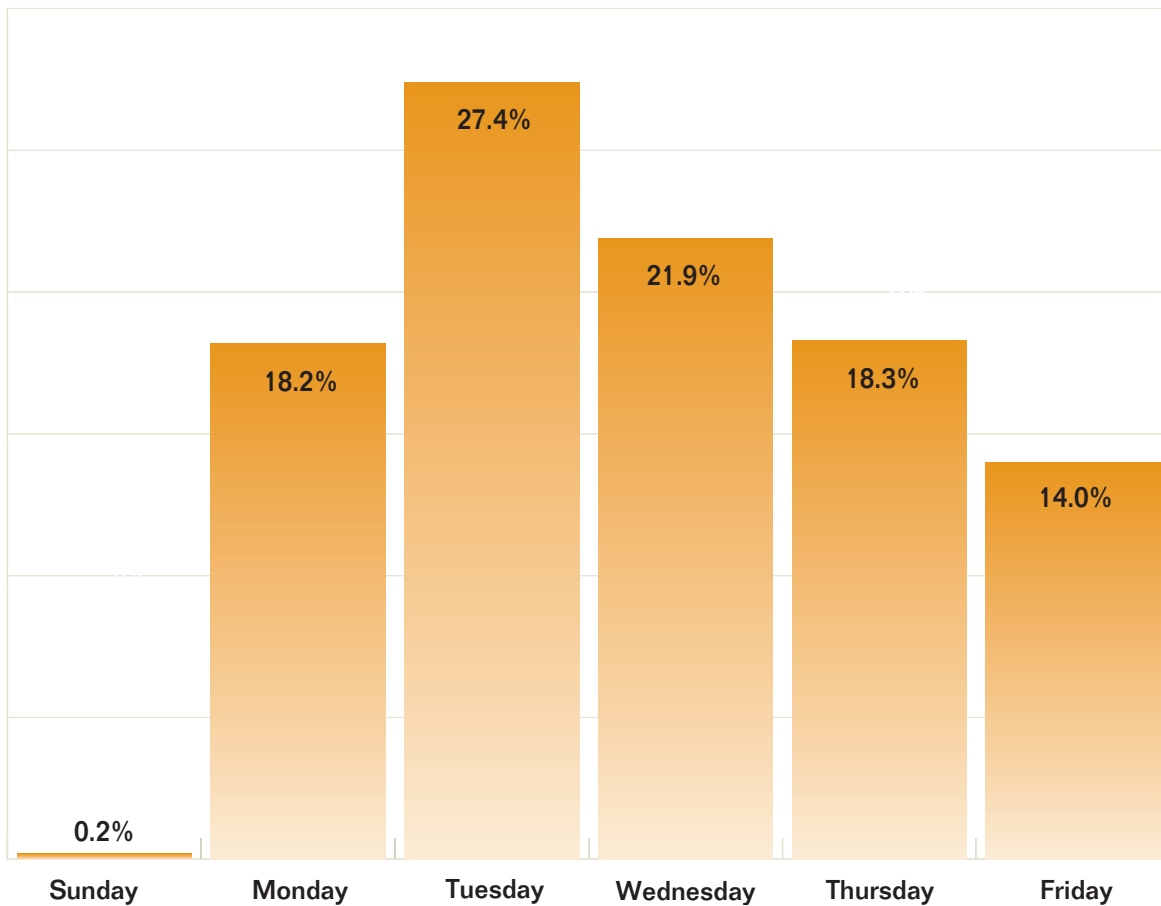
► **CHART 2.8** Average Open and Click-Through Rates for Customer Campaigns by Month



Day of the Week Customer Email Campaigns Sent to the Education Market

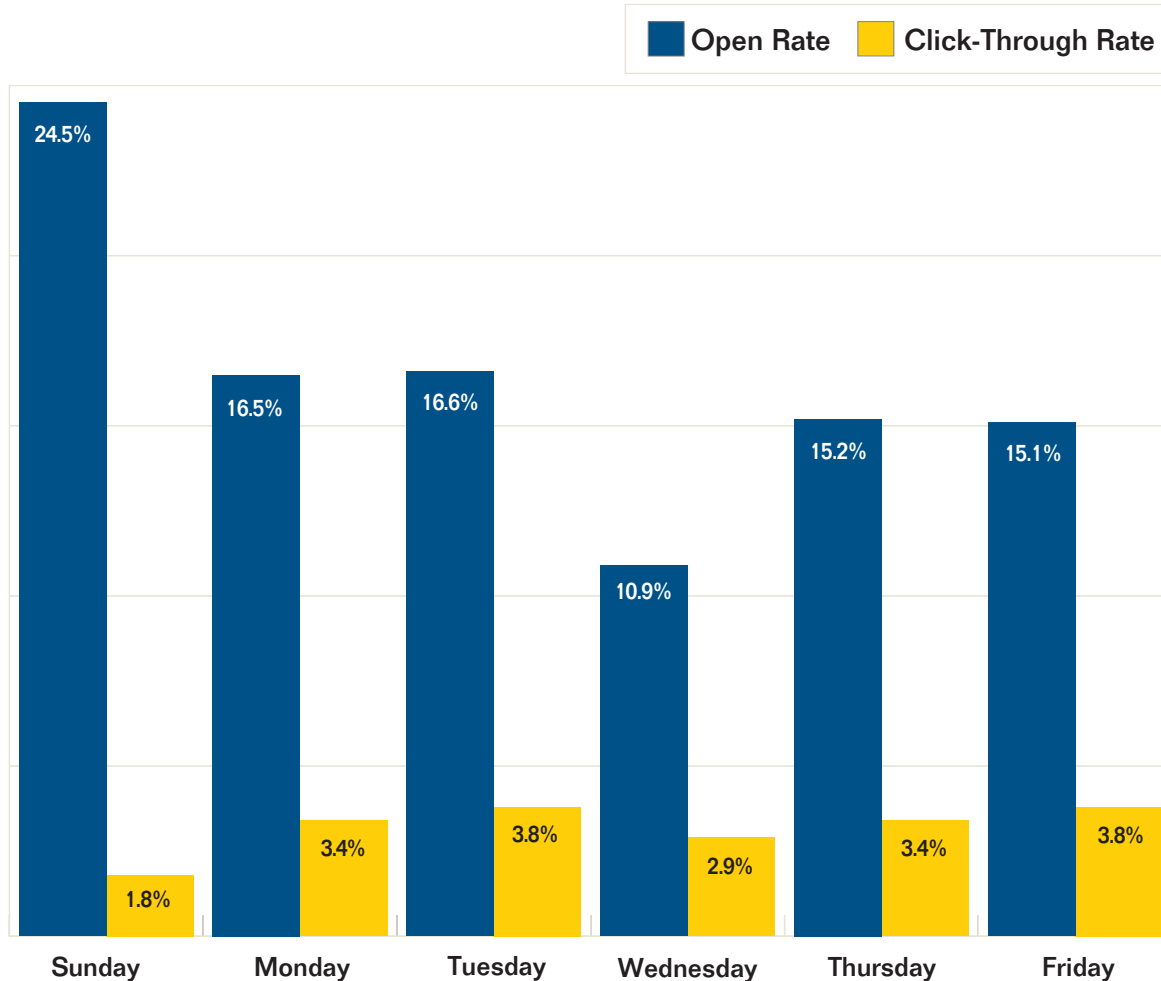
Over one-fourth of the customer emails were deployed on a Tuesday, with most of the remainder spread evenly among Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Friday is the least popular weekday, with only a smattering of messages sent over the weekend.

► CHART 2.9 Percentage of Total Customer Emails Sent by Day of Week



While Chart 2.10 might suggest that Sunday is the most effective day to send emails, conclusions about the effectiveness of Sunday deployment should be made with caution because of the very small number of emails sent on that day. It's possible that Sunday is a good choice for some groups of educators who might use Sundays to catch up on email, but there simply is not enough data to make this a firm conclusion. Wednesday had the lowest Open and Click-Through rates of the weekdays.

► **CHART 2.10** Average Open and Click-Through Rates by Day for Customer Campaigns



Lessons Learned From 2007 Customer Campaigns

The use of email to maintain strong and continuous relationships with customers has become an important element in many companies' overall marketing strategies. Because email is virtually instantaneous, it can be used for many different purposes—to alert customers to new catalogs, other mailings, and promotions and to provide information on new products, resource materials, and surveys.

The analysis of data from the customer campaigns deployed by MDR during 2007 suggests that education marketers are being creative in their use of email. These customer campaigns differ from prospecting campaigns in a variety of ways. On average, customer campaigns have higher Open and Click-Through rates than prospecting campaigns. Customer campaigns also tend to be comparatively smaller than prospecting campaigns. The timing of email communications with customers shows some different patterns from prospecting emails. April was by far the most popular month for customer emails (compared with March and May for prospecting campaigns), and companies utilized the summer months more frequently for customer messages. Customer emails also tend to be deployed more evenly throughout the workweek than prospecting campaigns.

▼ CHAPTER 3

Survey of Education Marketers

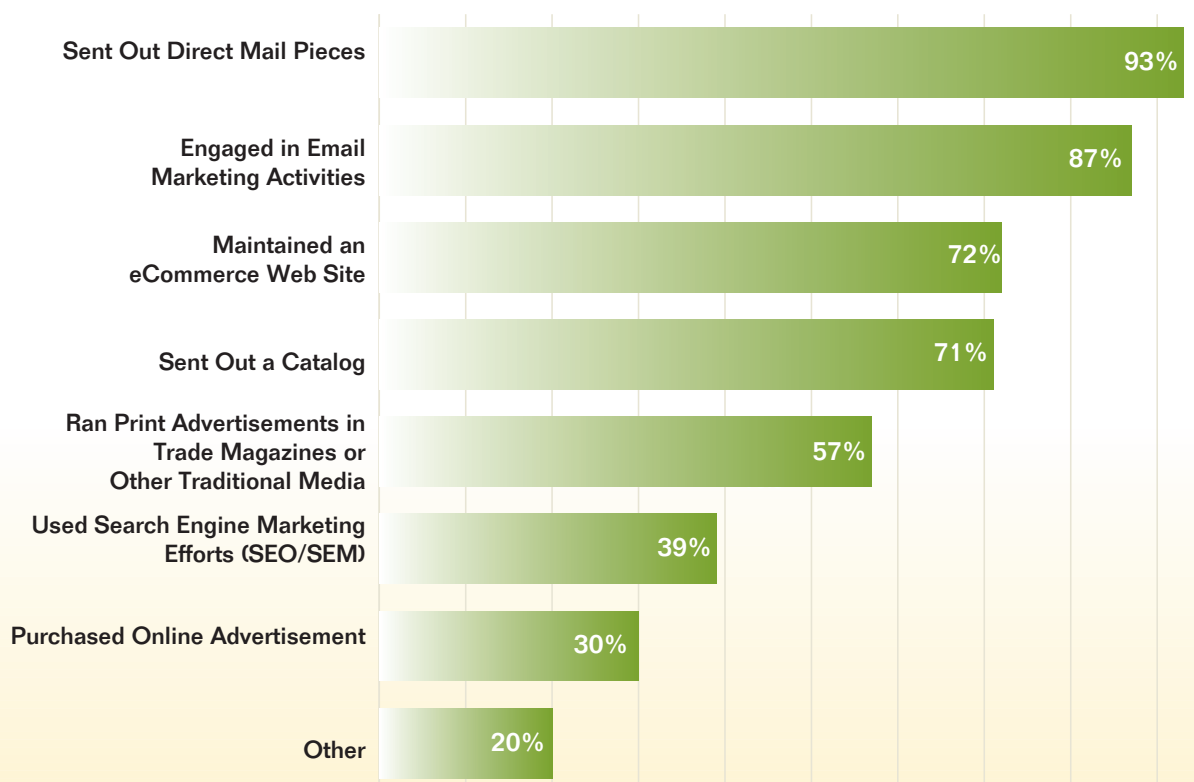
Overview

In late September 2007, a representative sample from MDR's customer database was surveyed to gather baseline data on marketing techniques and anticipated trends. Only companies with at least 25% of their total revenues from the education sector and those that had a direct marketing budget to reach educators were included. In order to encourage participation, the first 100 respondents were sent Amazon.com gift certificates. The analysis that follows is based on responses to this email survey from 127 education marketers.

Major Direct Marketing Activities

Survey respondents were asked to identify (from a list of eight options) which direct marketing activities they had used in the past 12 months. By far the most prevalent approach was direct mail, closely followed by email marketing (utilized by 93% and 87%, respectively). Maintaining an eCommerce Web site was cited by 72% of respondents. Catalogs, the traditional mainstay of educational marketing, were sent out by only 71%, suggesting that both education marketers and prospective purchasers may be gradually moving toward electronic catalogs or other means of providing information about educational products and services.

► CHART 3.1 Percentage of Direct Marketing Activities Utilized in Past 12 Months



The most frequently cited “other activities” were conferences, trade shows, and conventions. Also mentioned were telemarketing, fax, complimentary samples, and informational approaches (i.e., white papers, research papers, workshops).

All respondents indicated that they utilized integrated or multi-channel marketing, with direct mail and email marketing the most frequently cited components. Trade shows, Web sites, print advertisements, and telesales are also often part of these companies’ integrated marketing efforts. Very few companies utilize retail or other marketing approaches. The handful of “Other” responses included collateral/brochures, personal visits, public relations, and TV/radio.

► **TABLE 3.1** Activities Utilized as Part of Integrated or Multi-Channel Marketing

Activity	% of Activities Utilized
Direct mail	94
Email	87
Trade shows	76
Web eCommerce (drive to Web site, search, banners)	65
Print advertising	53
Telesales	41
Retail	4
Other	4

Email Marketing Techniques

Education marketers utilize numerous approaches to gathering email addresses of prospective customers. The most popular method (by 88% of respondents) is to collect email addresses on the company’s Web site. Another popular method (by 81%) is to collect email addresses at trade shows and conferences. Surprisingly, only slightly more than one-half (53%) reported collecting email addresses for marketing purposes during their inbound telesales ordering process.

Four out of five education marketers (80%) reported they had sent product information or special offers to existing customers via email, and 56% indicated they had sent out prospecting emails in the past 12 months. Slightly more than half (53%) sent out transactional emails (order confirmation, tracking, etc.). Email is used for a variety of other marketing purposes, including announcements (product and technical updates, renewal for product support subscriptions, contests, trade shows), to solicit orders for complimentary copies, and to drive traffic to their Web sites.

An open-ended question on the survey asked respondents to indicate what they thought was the most important element of a successful email campaign. The most frequent cluster of responses related to various aspects of targeting, personalization, and relevance to the recipient (aptly expressed by one respondent who noted that “...the list and the message must be in perfect

sync.”). A related, frequently cited response focused on the importance of the subject line. Somewhat fewer responses focused on the actual message content and specific offer. There were also a number of responses that related to the technical aspects of email communication, such as email list accuracy, getting past spam filters and firewalls, getting recipients to open the email, ability to collect opt-in emails, and tracking results. Several respondents kept their attention on their ultimate goal and cited “getting the order,” “conversion rate,” and “getting sales dollars.”

Sales Force

Education marketers utilize several different kinds of direct sales personnel. Nearly two out of three have a direct sales force and also have an inbound telesales force or customer service representatives taking orders. Somewhat fewer respondents reported utilizing independent sales representatives and having a sales lead generation program. “Other” direct sales efforts cited by respondents were distributors/wholesalers and using MDR databases.

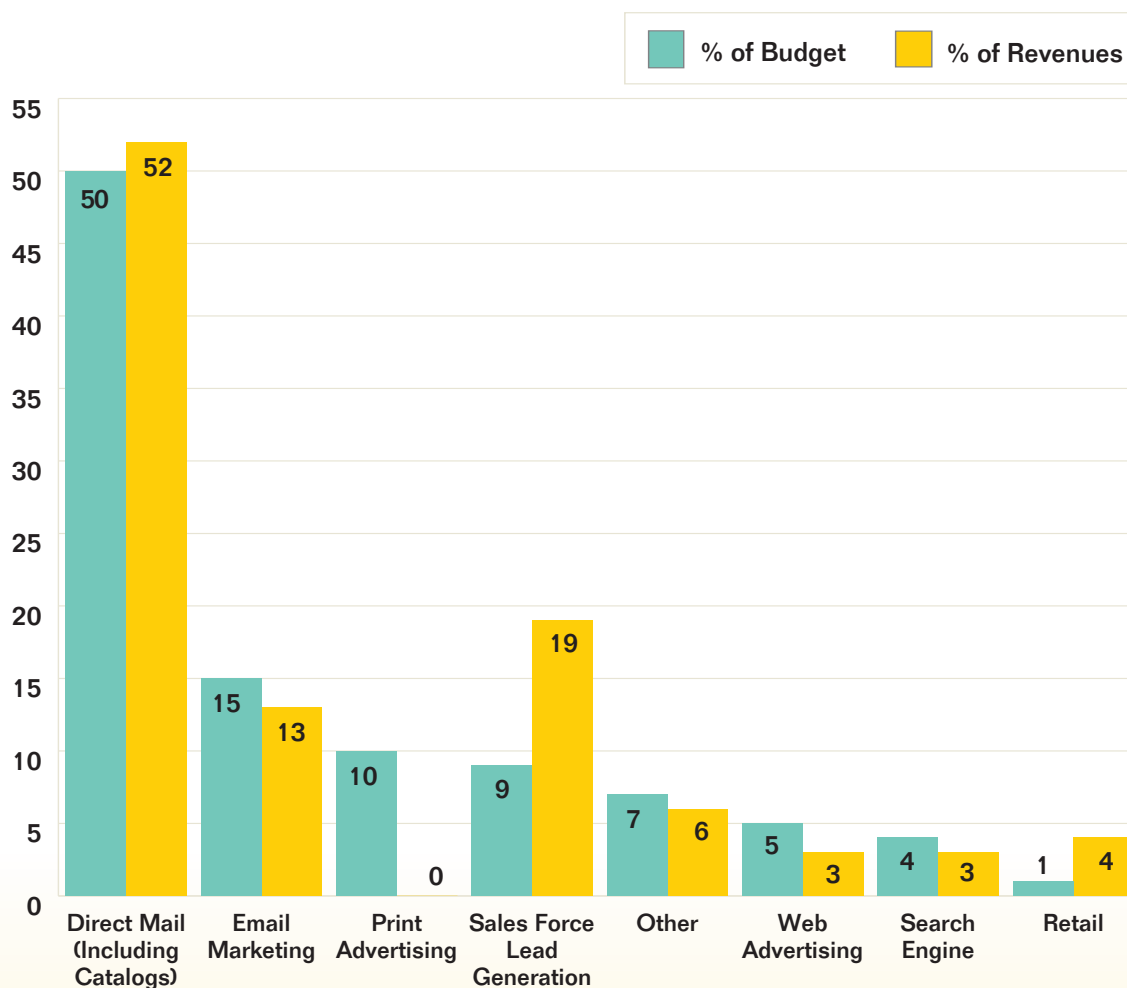
► **TABLE 3.2** Types of Direct Sales

Type	% of Direct Sales
Have a direct sales force (i.e., a sales force on the payroll)	63
Have an inbound telesales force or customer service representatives taking orders	60
Utilize independent sales representatives (i.e., free agents who do not work directly for the company)	46
Have a sales lead generation program	39
Other	2

Marketing Budgets and Source of Revenue

There are broad correlations between budgets and sources of revenue from the various marketing channels. Survey respondents were asked what was the general distribution of their marketing budgets and general distribution of source of revenues for the past school year. Direct mail (including catalogs) accounts for one-half of both marketing budgets and revenue. Email marketing represents the second largest budget category (at 15%) and nearly that much (13%) in revenues. Interestingly, 10% of marketing budgets are devoted to print advertising, but no direct sales are attributed to this particular type of marketing. On the other hand, sales force lead generation brings in 19% of sales but represents only 9% of the budget. The low-budget percentage may be related to the fact that sales force expenses are not included in many marketing budgets.

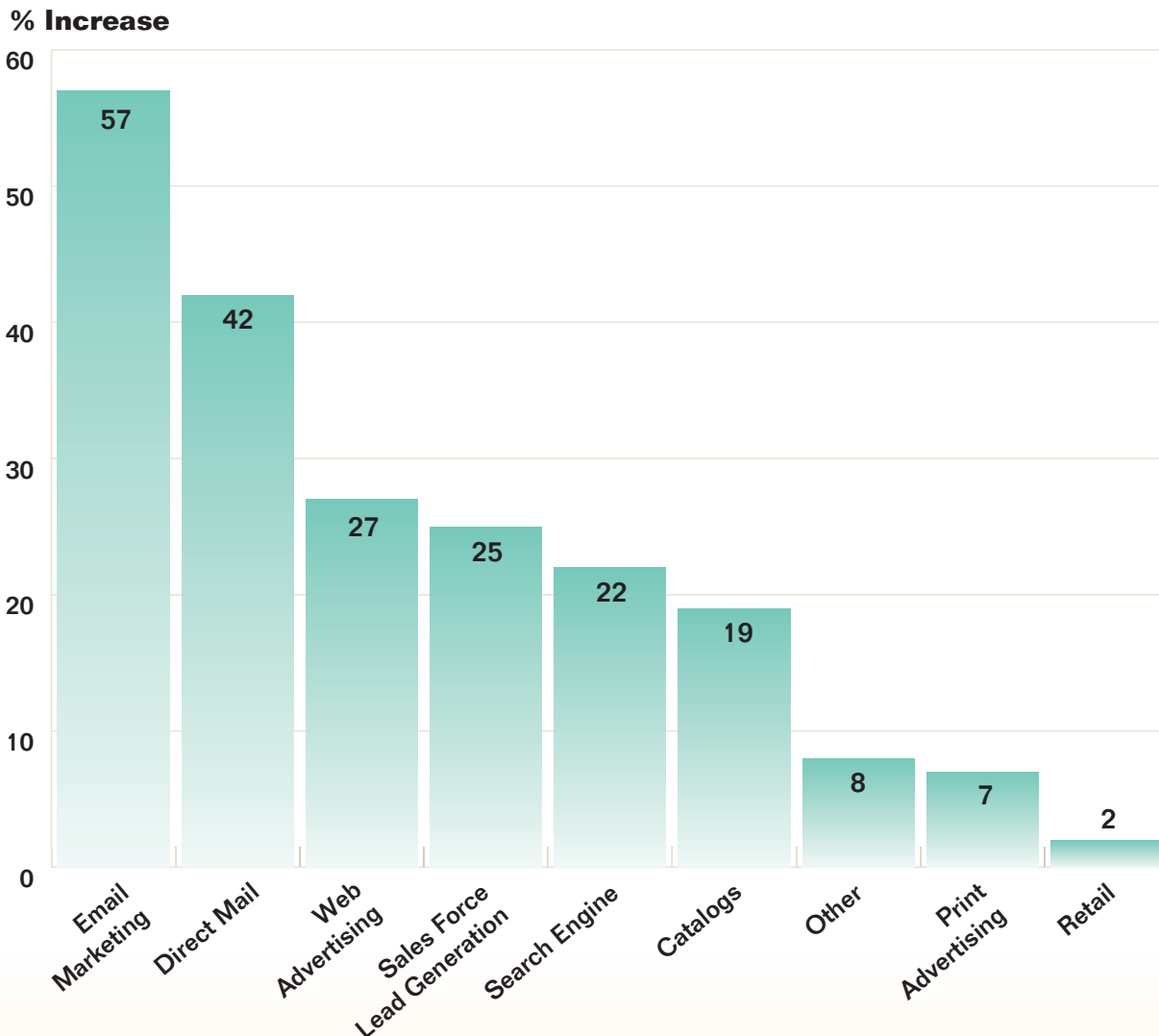
► **CHART 3.2** Percentage of Budget and Revenue by Marketing Channel



Forecast of Future Spending Increases

Respondents were asked to select up to three marketing channels where they foresaw significant increases in spending over the next 12 months. Email marketing is projected to have the largest increase in spending, followed by direct mail. Only modest increases are projected for print advertising and retail. The “other” category included conference travel, national accounts sales manager, seminars, telesales, television, trade conferences, and Web site development.

► CHART 3.3 Forecasted Increases in Spending in Next 12 Months



The primary reason for the projected increase in email marketing related to effectiveness. The following representative comments provide insight about education marketers' views on the effectiveness of email marketing:

- ▶ Ability to reach market segments that are difficult to reach via direct mail.
- ▶ Better response rates.
- ▶ Conversion rate is better.
- ▶ Cost-efficient, trackable, highly qualified leads.
- ▶ Easy, inexpensive way to correspond with our opt-in customers.
- ▶ Email has an attractive cost structure. Way cheaper than mailing catalogs. Bigger investment in supporting the Web and Web marketing, as we cut the amount we spend on catalogs.
- ▶ Faster responses.
- ▶ Fax and direct mail advertising has become too expensive and is much less effective.
- ▶ Increasing postage rates and paper costs—cheaper way to mail more to prospects.
- ▶ Internet/email usage is gaining strength.
- ▶ It's a cost-effective marketing tool. You can hit a large number of people for a relatively low cost.
- ▶ It's inexpensive. If Click-Through rates are high enough, we are getting orders with a very high ROI.
- ▶ Most cost-effective way to reach customers. Can also reach them with more time-sensitive information.
- ▶ Our audience likes this medium of communication.
- ▶ The return is easy to track and much faster than direct mail.
- ▶ We are trying to reach segments of the market that are not efficiently covered by our direct sales force. To do this, we are working more with email and outsourced telesales.

There were more varied reasons provided for the projected increase in direct mail spending. Some related to effectiveness (“the best way to reach teachers,” “good results,” “it’s what’s been working best”) and expectations of their market (“...customers like to have something in their hand.”). Several also cited new products and expanding product lines as the primary reason for increasing direct mail expenditures. Another significant group of reasons clustered around increasing costs, due to higher postage, paper, and printing costs. A number also suggested that they were focusing more on direct mail in place of larger print media, such as catalogs.

Web advertising appears to be an emerging marketing channel for many education marketers, and a number of respondents indicated plans to experiment more to determine the ROI of using Web advertising. Some plan to increase their use of Web advertising because they have already seen promising results, while others see Web advertising as a good way to increase traffic to their Web sites.

Increases in sales force lead generation are related to expanding sales reps, in many cases to introduce new products and services or to expand into new geographical markets. Some respondents indicated that their sales force is their primary marketing advantage and is most effective in generating sales, while others indicated that they were trying different methods to reach their markets.

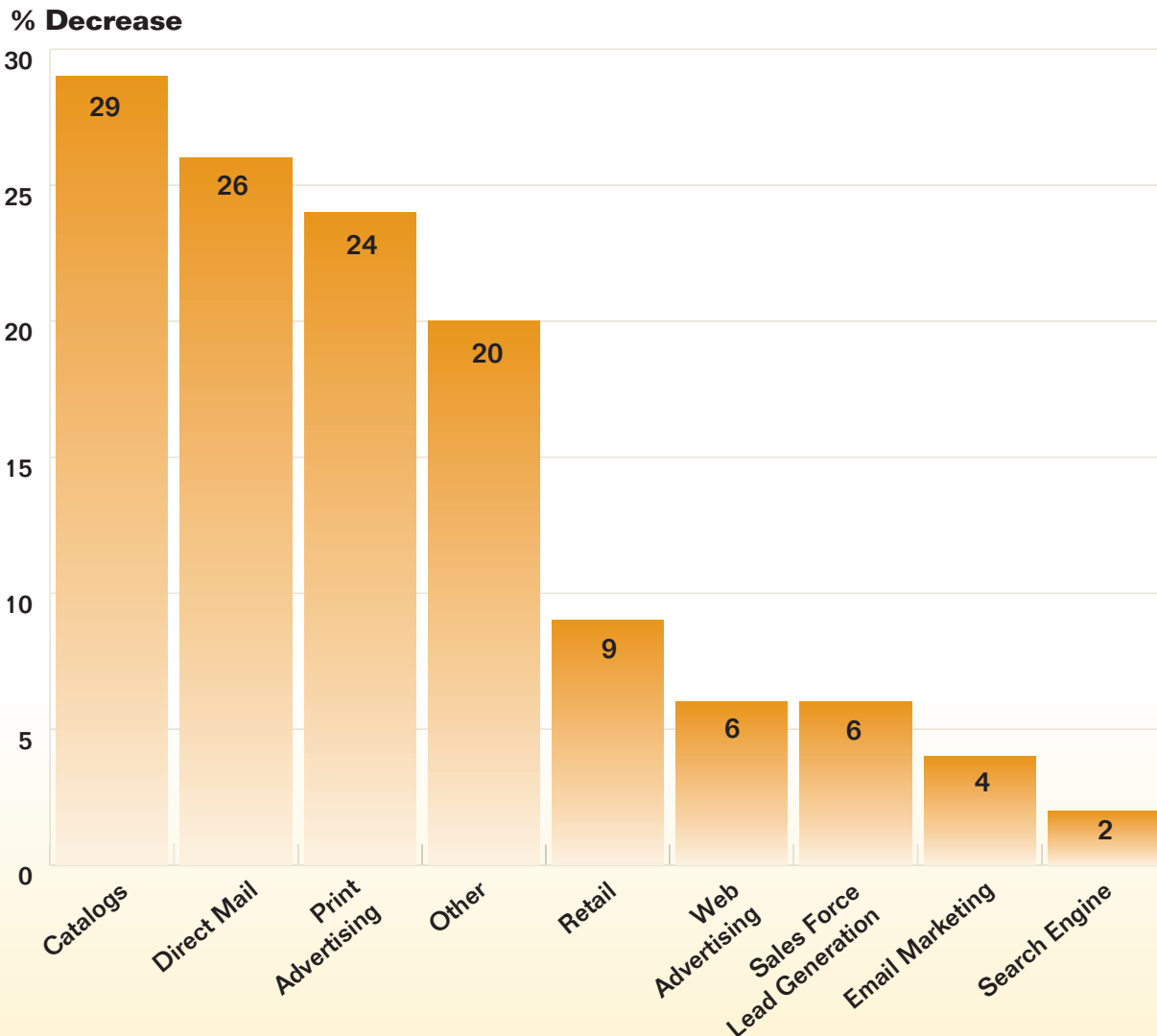
Several reasons were given for increasing expenditures allocated to search engines. Some related to past effectiveness (“we get great results from search engine optimization”), while others noted that this had been a somewhat neglected area, and they needed to focus on more “modern” approaches. Many also noted the need to drive more traffic to their Web sites.

Catalog increases relate in part not only to higher costs for postage, paper, and printing but also to some marketers developing new or larger catalogs for new products and expanding product lines or an increased number of catalogs because of growth in their customer base.

Forecast of Future Spending Decreases

Traditional print-based marketing channels are most likely to see decreases over the next 12 months. However, in terms of order of magnitude, the decreases forecasted are less than the increases discussed in the section above.

► CHART 3.4 Forecasted Decreases in Spending in Next 12 Months

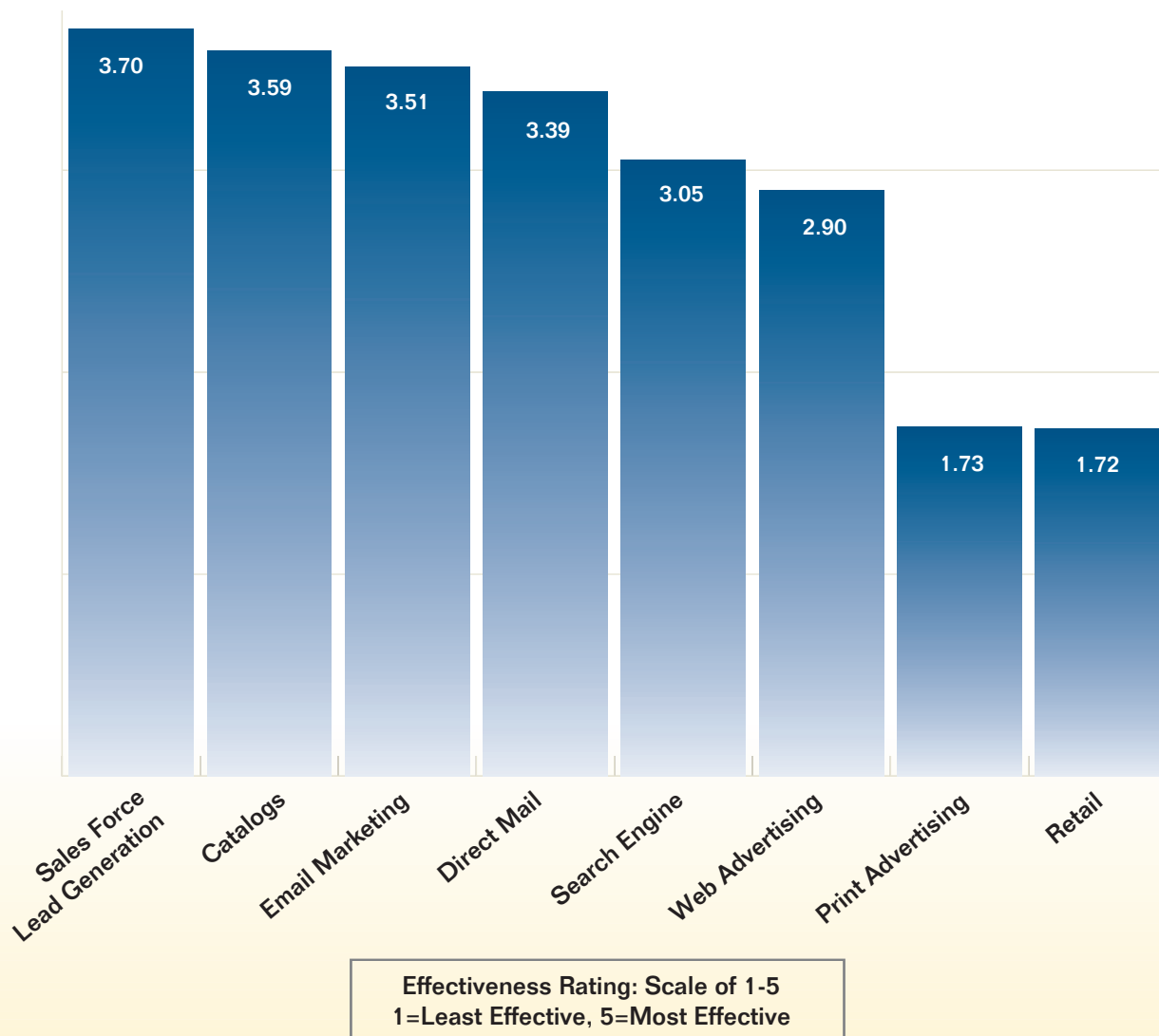


Almost all of the reasons for decreases in marketing expenditures over the next year relate to reallocation of resources. In the case of catalogs, many respondents noted the increasing cost of producing and mailing catalogs and the fact that the same information is or can be provided on their Web sites or through electronic catalogs. In addition, a number of respondents indicated that catalogs were becoming increasingly less efficient and effective. Similar reasons were provided for decreases in direct mail and advertising. Almost all respondents who checked the “Other” category explained that no decreases were projected in any areas for the upcoming year.

Effectiveness of Sales/Marketing Channels

The final survey question asked for a rating of the overall effectiveness of each of the listed primary marketing channels. Ratings were provided on a scale of 1-5, with “5” being very effective and “1” being not at all effective.

► **CHART 3.5 Overall Effectiveness by Marketing Channel**



Sales force lead generation was rated most effective, followed closely by catalogs, email marketing, and direct-mail. Print advertising and retail were rated least effective.

Lessons Learned From 2007 Survey of Education Marketers

This survey of education marketers reveals just how entrenched email has become in the overall mix of marketing activities. While seen as an interesting experimental approach just a few years ago, email has become an increasingly important avenue of communication, both within a comprehensive multi-channel marketing strategy and the avenue of choice for some companies that concentrate on one approach. The fact that 87% of education marketers reported using email marketing activities in the past year (trailing direct mail activities by a scant six percentage points) is evidence of the widespread acceptance of email.

Companies devote considerable resources to collecting email addresses of both current and prospective customers (e.g., through their Web sites, trade shows, and conferences). Most (80%) reported utilizing email to inform existing customers about special offers and new products, and slightly more than half (56%) had sent out prospecting emails over the past year. Marketers noted the importance of targeting, personalization, and relevance of message as the most important characteristics of a successful email campaign.

While education marketers are not projecting the demise of direct mail, many project a realignment of the mix of marketing approaches, with some cutbacks on print materials accompanied by increases in e-marketing (email, electronic catalogs, and increased use of the company Web site). Increased costs (paper and postage) for print materials as well as the effectiveness and acceptance of e-marketing approaches were cited as primary reasons for this shift.

Test, Refine, Retest, Etc.

One of the advantages of e-marketing is that content and format can be quickly and easily revised. Before launching your campaign, try it out to be sure your message is getting through to your audience.

Apply both qualitative and quantitative marketing research practices to your e-marketing plans. Some ideas to consider:

- ▶ Establish an email panel of current customers to receive and provide feedback about your email.
- ▶ Test that your message is able to make it past the most common types of firewalls and filtering systems.
- ▶ Deploy slightly different versions of your planned campaign to carefully segmented samples of your market to determine if certain designs, specific wording, or different types of offers yield better results.
- ▶ Based on results from your tests, revise and refine your message.
- ▶ Repeat as necessary until you are satisfied that your message is working.

▼ CHAPTER 4

Characteristics of Prospecting Campaigns

Overview

With over six years and thousands of customer email deployments under our belt, MDR has an ever-expanding body of experience with what works in e-marketing campaigns—and what doesn't. In this chapter, we are tapping into that insight and experience to provide actionable best practices that can help improve your email campaign creative. Our team has analyzed the creative elements from a sample of over 300 prospecting email campaigns deployed by MDR from September 2006 and May 2007. This analysis covers both higher education and K-12 marketers and spans all market verticals and company sizes. Each campaign's message content and design was reviewed against several criteria to gather aggregate information about the campaign's purpose, specific offers made, creative elements, and technical characteristics of the email message itself. A secondary analysis was also conducted, looking specifically at the word/character composition of the subject line and body text of 4,423 campaigns from the past 24 months of MDR customer campaign deployments.

Impact of Email Creative on Message Effectiveness—From Deployment to Conversion

Seasoned email marketers recognize that all email campaigns face three fundamental hurdles on the path to success:

1. **The email must get opened**—and thus the way you capture attention—your subject line is critical in getting through this initial step.
2. Enough of **the email message must be read** to convey the value or goal to the reader and engage them to take the next step.
3. Once the reader responds, **the email must set the reader on the path to conversion or sale through** a call to action to take the next step, whether it's clicking through to a Web site landing page, calling an 800 number, or visiting a store.

Let's take a look at how education marketers have made use of various email subject lines and body creative elements and the impact on campaign results.

Subject Lines

The most important element in getting an email message opened is gaining the trust/confidence of the recipient and helping them see some value or relevance—even before they open the message. Gaining trust is important to overcoming the reader's increasingly critical view that the message may simply be junk, spam, or a waste of their time (or even worse, that it might be a phishing attempt or other potentially harmful or malicious email). Both the "from" field and the

“subject” line are your key areas for building trust, and there are a number of ways to use the subject line to improve how you do that, which we will discuss later in this chapter.

In last year’s MDR email trends report, our survey of educators focused on what attributes of an email message influenced them to open it. There were two overwhelming attributes that got email opened: recognizing the sender and the relevance of the email message.

► **TABLE 4.1 Attributes Attributed to Opening Emails**

Attribute	% of Teachers Indicating Least Likely to Open	% of Teachers Indicating Most Likely to Open
Recognize the sender	6	85
Subject line is topic I teach	12	69
Subject line refers to state standards	38	31
Subject line mentions special offers/trials	55	19
Subject line references teacher testimonials	72	8

From the MDR report, *Email Trends in the Education Market: A Comprehensive Review of the 2005-2006 School Year*.

Incorporate Email Into a Multi-Channel Marketing Plan

The power of email increases when it’s used as an integral part of an overall marketing plan.

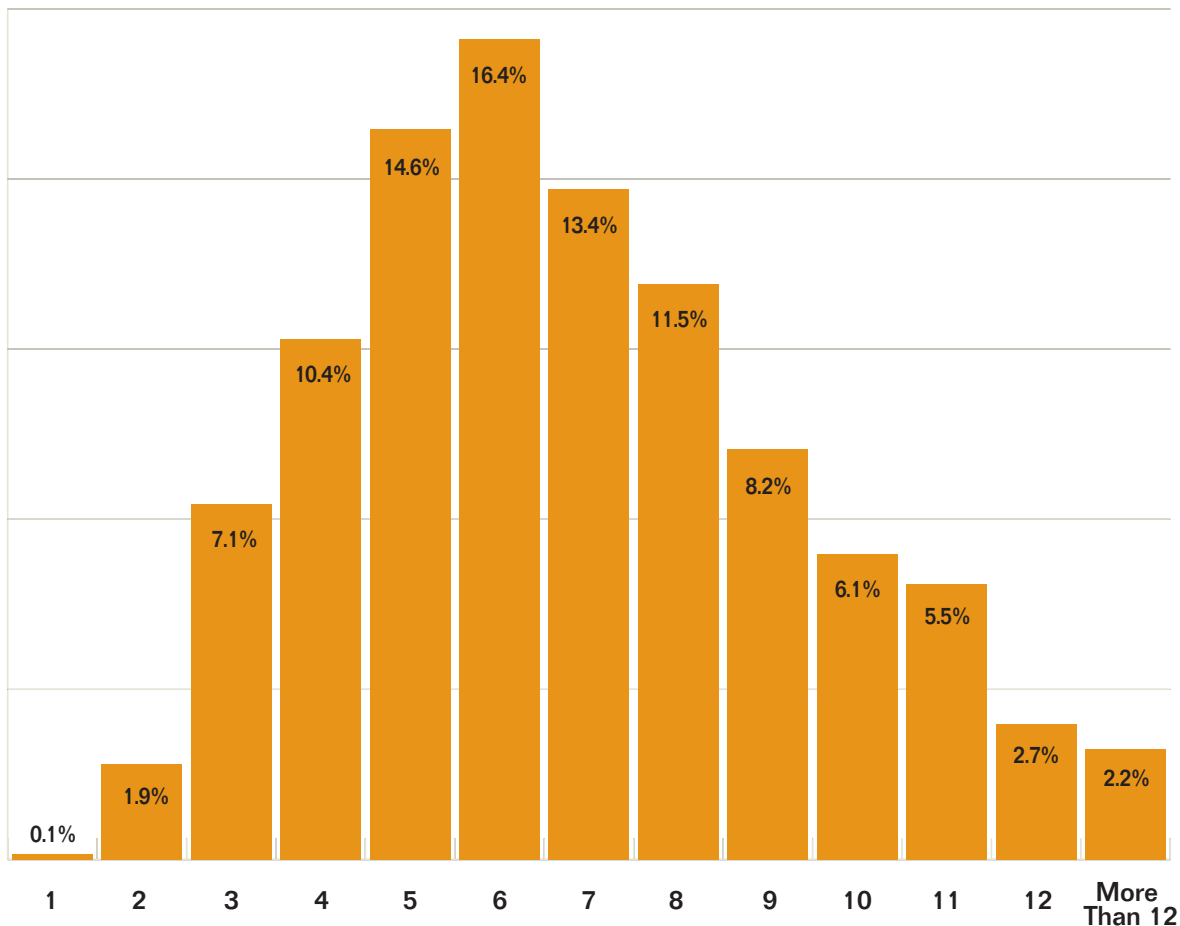
Integrating email into multi-channel marketing might include:

- Use email to alert customers or prospects to an upcoming or just completed print campaign (e.g., “your catalog is on its way” or “you recently received XYZ”).
- Announce your participation in upcoming professional conferences.
- Capture information about readers who download material or take advantage of special offers and pass along to designated sales representatives.
- Develop special workshops, webinars, or other events where interested readers can go for additional information.
- Create useful downloadable resources to accompany your message and provide value to your readers. These might be adaptations of your primary products or services.

Reviewing Subject Lines

The number of words in the subject lines of 4,423 prospecting campaigns over the past two years varied considerably. The overall average number of words in subject lines was seven. Some subject lines were very short (20% using four or fewer words), while others were quite long (16.5% with ten or more words).

► **CHART 4.1** Number of Words in Subject Lines, Percentage of Total Prospecting Campaigns



The data suggests a correlation between the length of the subject line and response rates of the campaign. While not true for every case, generally, the shorter the subject line, the higher the Open rate. Although there were relatively few subject lines with only one or two words, the average Open rates for those campaigns was 20.0%.* These campaigns usually were very focused on a single action, such as “Feedback Requested” or “Teacher Survey.” For campaigns with subject lines of three or four words, the average Open rate was 17.6%.* At the other end of the spectrum, subject lines of nine words or more yielded an Open rate of 16.1%.*

*Note: Because the subject line analysis looked at 24 months of historical data, the average Open rates overall were higher than the 2006-2007 school year Open rates. Open rates for the 2005-2006 school year averaged 18%.

The better response rates to messages with shorter subject lines can be attributed to two factors. First, the viewable length of the subject line can vary widely based on the email client, service provider, or browser being used. Users can also adjust the width of these fields to suit their own preference as well. Thus, some marketers who use long subject lines, and those who leave the most important messaging to the latter part of the subject line, may find that a good deal of people are not viewing their entire subject line. Second, it's a widely held belief that online behavior is characterized by much shorter attention spans. Therefore, shorter, to-the-point subject lines can be scanned and digested with increased efficiency by the reader.

MDR E-Marketing Tip

Keep email subject lines short, focused, and to the point. Make sure that your value proposition or promotional enticement is up front in the subject line so that it has a higher chance of being both displayed and read.

All prospecting subject lines were scanned to calculate how frequently education marketers used specific words. Nearly one-fourth of all subject lines used the word "you" or "your" in an attempt to personalize the message. "New" was the next most prevalent word used (in 12.3% of the subject lines). A series of words related to teachers' professional interests were also found in many subject lines, as were words of enticement and words requesting action.

Other email marketing studies (most notably MarketingSherpa's *Email Marketing 2007 Benchmark Guide*) have also suggested that implicit personalization (using the person's name) in the subject line increases overall campaign performance, so it should be considered when testing subject lines as well.

► **TABLE 4.2** Word Use Frequency in Subject Lines of Prospecting Campaigns

Word	% of Campaigns	Word	% of Campaigns
Personalization		New Products	
you/your	23.7	new	12.3
help	2.6	introducing	0.3
		improved	0.1
Job Related		updated	
student	6.7		
math	2.8	Enticements	
reading	2.6	free	4.3
learning	2.1	offer	2.8
assessment	2.0	special	2.7
curriculum	1.5	win	1.6
resource	1.4	sample	1.2
teaching	0.9	option	0.7
state	0.9	cash	0.6
standards	0.8		
NCLB	0.2	Action Requested	
		survey	3.9
Qualifiers		invitation	1.7
important	0.5	evaluation	0.3
limited	0.4	download	0.2
hurry	0.1		

Although only used by a small percentage of campaigns, the subject line words with the highest Open rates were “cash,” “evaluation,” “improved,” and “important.” This should be viewed as an opportunity to explore some of these trigger words in your creative copy testing. In the limited set of examples we had, they appear to have positive impact on Open rates.

Among the more frequently used words, “new” and “you” drew above-average Open rates. Subject lines with the following words tended to have lower Open rates: “hurry,” “offer,” “sample,” “free,” “reading,” and “NCLB.”

The word “free” is universally known to draw strong response in direct marketing copy. However, this data suggests that you might want to consider trying to focus on brand recognition, relevance, and value proposition in the subject line in order to get them to open it, saving “free” or other heavily promotional words for the body copy.

A similar summary was made of special characters and symbols within subject lines. Exclamation marks were used by more than one in ten campaigns. Colons are also popular since they allow the sender to string together two ideas or to provide more detail to a general first word or phrase. Only a handful of campaigns used question marks, dollar signs, plus signs, or registration marks in their subject lines.

► **TABLE 4.3** Frequency and Open Rates for Special Characters Used in Subject Lines of Prospecting Campaigns

Character	% of Campaigns	% of Average Open Rates
!	10.7	17.6
:	7.3	17.8
?	1.5	14.6
\$	0.9	12.9
+	0.4	15.8
®	0.2	15.1

Subject lines with exclamation marks and colons had higher average Open rates. While this information is interesting, it should not be necessarily viewed as an indication that you should regularly incorporate these characters into your subject lines. Rather, it validates that using these types of characters in your subject line are probably not going to negatively impact your campaign. The use of the dollar sign saw the lowest average Open rate, perhaps because this character is blocked by certain firewalls and anti-spam software or is viewed negatively by readers for the same spam assumption.

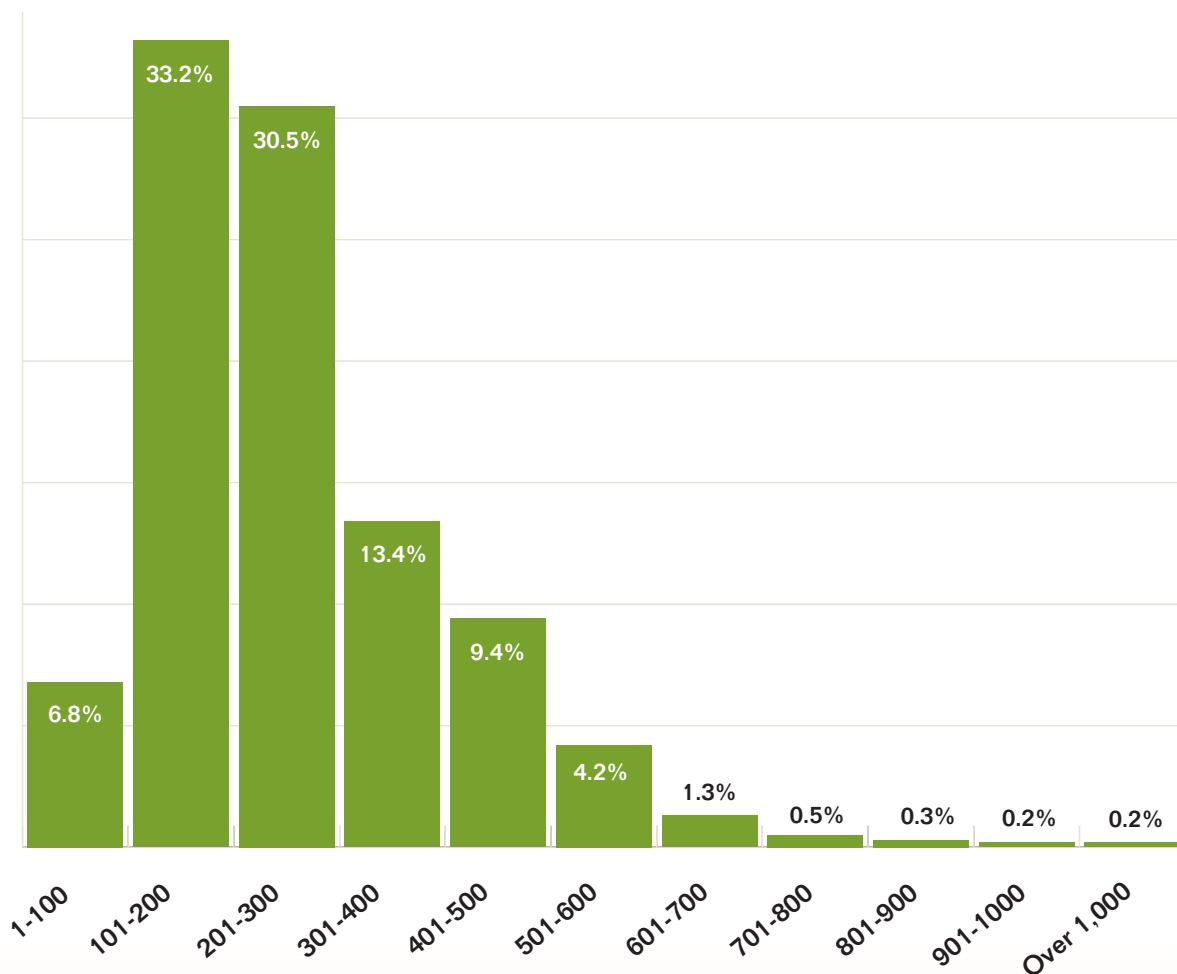
MDR E-Marketing Tip

Using special characters in the subject line: Stay away from using \$ when possible, as it may carry spam connotations to both filters and viewers. Exclamation marks appear to not have any negative effect on results, so use them when you really need to convey excitement. If you are using a question mark, you may want to review the subject line to determine if a question best conveys your brand value, is relevant to the reader and your value proposition, or is it effectively addressing challenges and questions your targeted recipient may indeed want answered.

Message Content

The full message texts were also scanned to obtain word counts and the frequency of use of specific words. The average for all prospecting campaigns was 260 words in the body of the message. However, there was considerable variation, with 6.8% of the campaigns using 100 or fewer words and a similar percentage of long messages of 501 or more words. There were no systematic differences in Open rates by length of message.

► **CHART 4.2** Number of Words in Body Text, Percentage of Total Prospecting Campaigns



The table below provides the percentage of campaigns utilizing specified words at least once in their messages. Virtually all campaigns personalize their messages by using the word “you” and a large number also suggest relevance by referring to students. “New” is the next most popular word, used in six out of ten messages and “free” is used in nearly one-half of the messages.

► **TABLE 4.4** Word Use Frequency in Message Content of Prospecting Campaigns

Word	% of Campaigns
you	95.2
student	60.8
new	59.7
free	49.1
offer	40.2
help	39.9
win	33.7
learning	31.7
state	28.4
special	27.7
reading	19.7
curriculum	18.6
resource	18.2
limited	18.2
teaching	17.3
standards	16.9
download	15.8
math	15.5
assessment	15.1
important	13.8
survey	13.0
sample	12.9
option	12.1
updated	3.9
improved	3.8
evaluation	2.7
introducing	2.7
invitation	2.3
cash	1.8
hurry	1.8
NCLB	1.3
congratulations	0.9
urgent	0.1

Special characters also were used frequently in the body text. As in subject lines, colons were used most frequently, followed by exclamation marks and question marks. Slightly more than one-half of the messages included the commercial “at” symbol (@), generally as part of an email address for further information or to request that the recipient’s name be removed from the mailing list. One-third used the dollar sign in their messages—in some cases to provide cost information for the products or services described but also often in conjunction with a special credit, gift certificate, possibility to win a personal or school prize, or other similar enticement.

► **TABLE 4.5** Frequency of Use of Special Characters in Message Content of Prospecting Campaigns

Character	% of Campaigns
:	93
!	6
?	56
@	51
\$	33
;	14
®	5
+	4

Campaign Objectives

The sample of campaigns from September and May were categorized by their intended objectives. More than two-thirds of all campaigns included a link to their company Web site in an effort to generate traffic. The next most prevalent objective appears to be branding and general product information (27.1%), followed closely by a soft offer for direct sales (25.4%). In many cases, the campaign appeared to have more than one objective.

► **TABLE 4.6** Objectives of Sample of September 2006 and May 2007 Prospecting Campaigns

Objective	% of Campaigns
Web site traffic generator	69.8
Branding/product information only	27.1
Direct sales – soft offer	25.4
Lead generation/request contact information	22.7
Seminar/event invitation	19.0
Direct sales – hard offer	18.3
Survey invitation	10.5
Sample request	5.1
Direct mail follow-up	2.4

There are some interesting differences in email objectives by type of company. Not surprisingly, 42% of the emails from the company grouping called “seminars and testing agencies” include invitations to seminars or events. This group is also more likely to send surveys (16%). Publishers are more likely to provide options for recipients to request samples (11%) and to engage in direct sales activities (25% hard offers and 38% soft offers). Public institutions are more likely to focus on branding/general product information (48%), as are resellers and companies that offer school supplies, programs, and manipulatives (35% and 34%, respectively).

Three-fourths of the prospecting campaigns referred to only one major product, event, or service. About 10% (many of which were surveys) did not specifically mention any product. Five percent mentioned two items, with the remainder referring to three or more different products.

Campaigns directed exclusively to the higher education market were more likely than other campaigns to focus on direct sales (particularly hard offers at 35%) and to permit recipients to request samples (14%). They were also less likely to provide branding/general product information or to generate leads and request contact information.

Although newsletters are frequently used by marketers to provide general updates and articles of interest to particular audiences, they are not generally used for prospecting campaigns. In fact, only 1% of the prospecting campaigns analyzed were newsletters.

In terms of Open and Click-Through rates, the campaigns that were a follow-up to direct mail were most successful, with more than two out of every five recipients recording a 22.7% Open rate and a 5.4% Click-Through rate. Clearly, the use of carefully timed, multi-channel marketing yields excellent results. The next most successful types of campaigns are those that invite recipients to request samples (with an Open rate of 21.5%), survey invitations (18.0%), and soft offers for direct sales (17.8%).

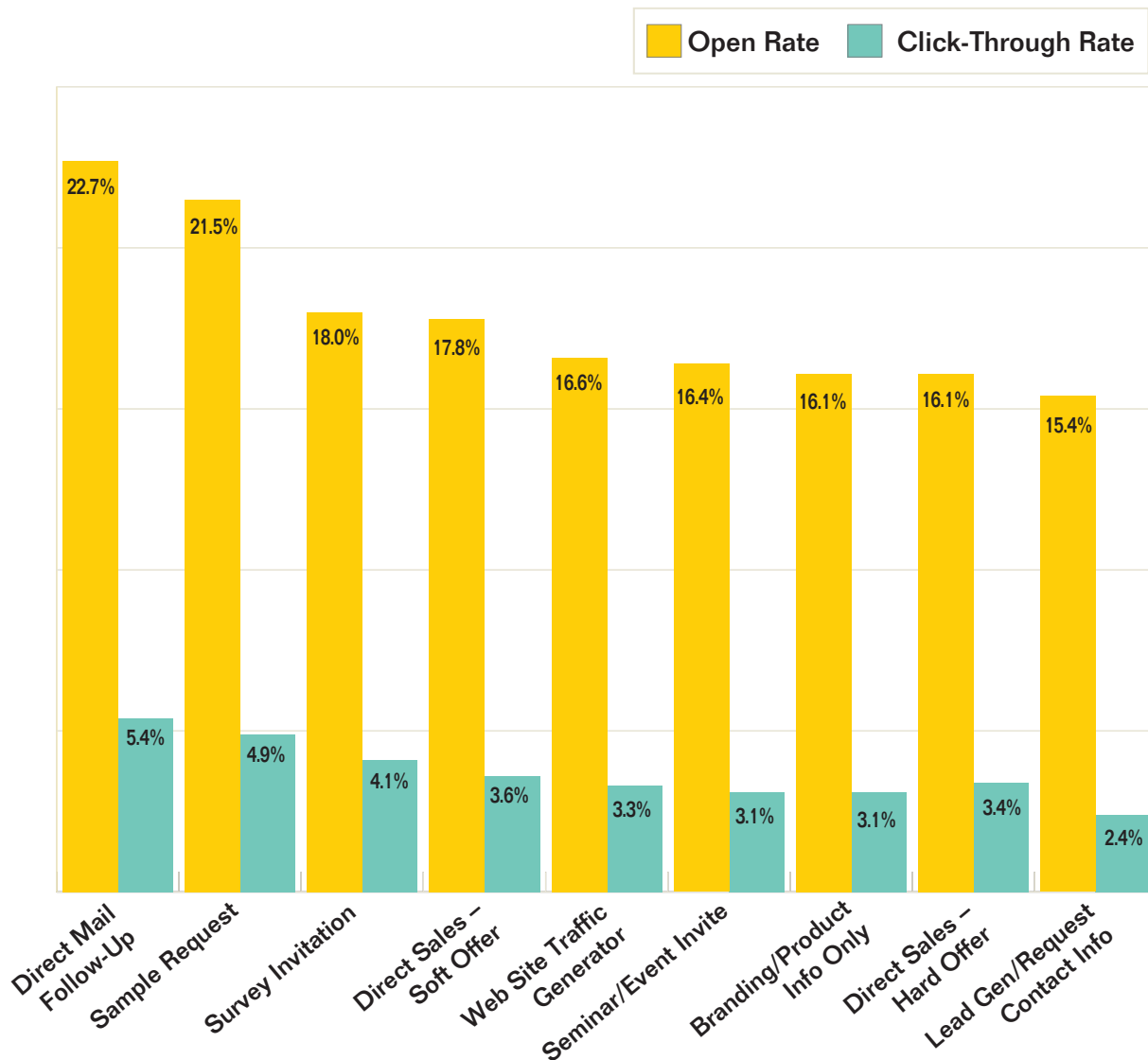
Developing Special E-Marketing Approaches Is Key to Success

What works in print is often not the best approach for e-marketing. Your readers will only see what is on their screen, and they cannot scan the entire message as easily as they can with a brochure or letter.

Characteristics of effective email messages are:

- ▶ The central “value proposition” is at the top. (Get immediately to the “what.” Most readers do not take the time to read through the why’s and how’s.)
- ▶ Include an appropriate balance of images and text.
- ▶ Give readers a choice between HTML and text.
- ▶ It should look like email, not your Web site (although it can certainly have common elements).
- ▶ Design specific “landing pages,” if the desired action of recipients is to lead them to your Web site.

► **CHART 4.3** Open and Click-Through Rates by Campaign Objectives



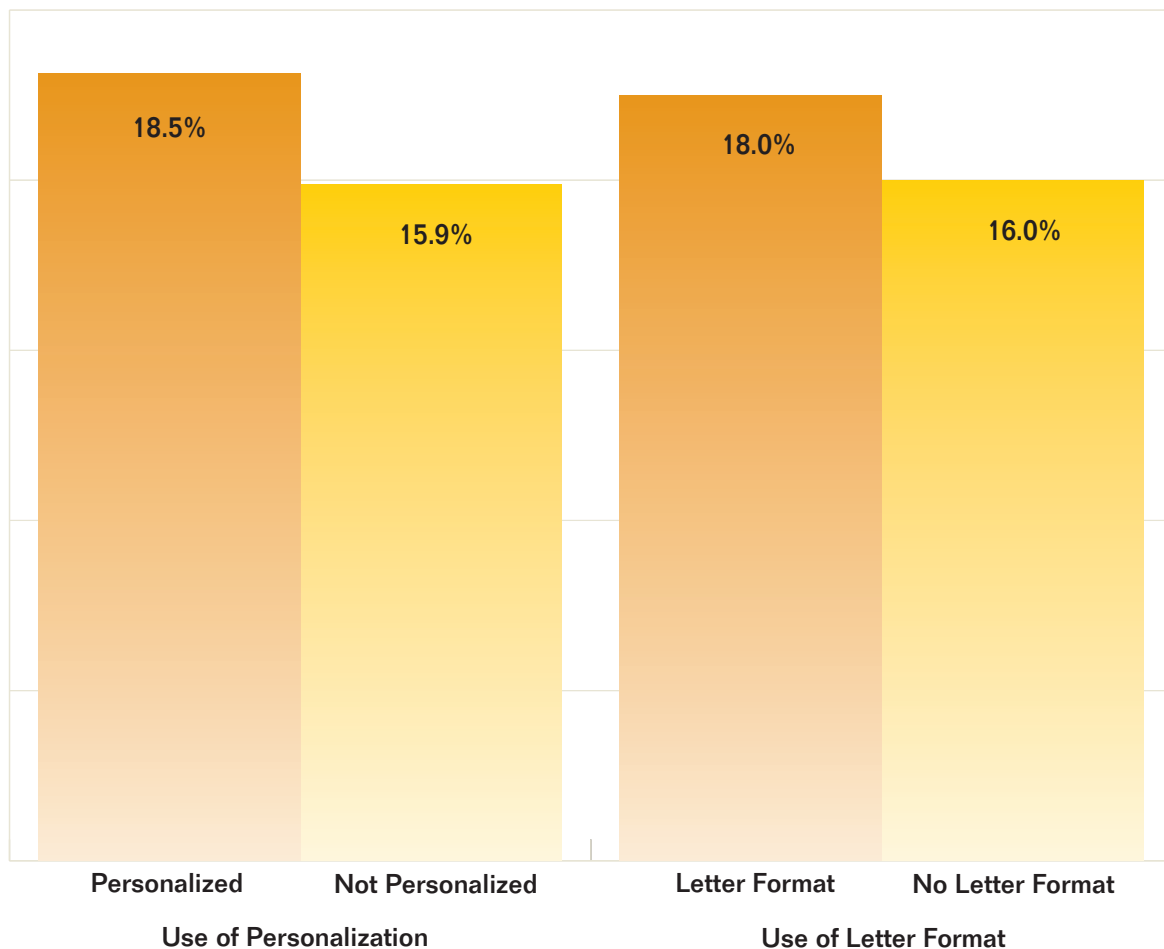
Special Offers

Information about any special offers was also tabulated. One-fourth of the emails included some type of limited-time offer, generally related to a special price. Free samples were mentioned in 16% of the emails. Only a handful of campaigns provided free white papers or other types of digital resource information and offered deferred payment or free shipping. Because not all campaigns in the study provided a special offer (while a few provided more than one such incentive), it's difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the effectiveness of one type of offer over another. However, of the more popular special offers, free samples of the product yielded the highest response rates in terms of both Open and Click-Through rates. And while only a handful of the campaigns studied offered free shipping, this incentive doesn't appear to be particularly enticing, perhaps because school personnel do not think about shipping and handling costs in the same way that consumers do.

Personalization

A basic principle of effective marketing is that a personalized message yields better results. Nearly one-third of the prospecting emails analyzed utilized personalization (generally addressing the recipient by name as an opening salutation). Not surprisingly, these campaigns had higher Open rates (18.5%) than those that were not personalized (15.9%). Slightly more than one-third of the campaigns utilized a letter format for their messages (often with personalization), and these campaigns also had higher Open rates than those that were not in a letter format.

► CHART 4.4 Open Rates for Personalized and Letter Format Campaigns



Add to Address Book Instructions

A review of prospecting campaigns also indicated that very few messages (only 1%) made use of the practice to suggest to the reader that they add the sender's name/email address to their address book to help ensure that future email messages are not blocked by security software. While this focus on "white listing" or "add to address book" messaging is often talked about in online marketing circles, it hasn't taken hold by education marketers in their prospecting efforts. Education marketers should make use of this best practice and add these instructions to all their interactive customer touches—from Web site customer data collection to email correspondence

to online ordering process. With regular exposure to this white-listing instruction in each prospect or customer message, you can use these multiple messaging touch points to convey the benefits of taking this action (e.g., make sure you do not miss out on our upcoming product announcement).

MDR E-Marketing Tip

Utilize add to address book instructions in all your online marketing touches. Whenever possible online, present your viewer with instructions for receiving email communications from your company, known as “white listing” or “add to address book” instructions.

These instructions should be added to:

- ▶ Your Web site when you are capturing their email address for a newsletter
- ▶ Your Web site when you are capturing their email address when they are placing an order
- ▶ On your order confirmation page
- ▶ On your order tracking and customer support pages
- ▶ In your transactional email messages (order confirmation, etc.)
- ▶ In your prospecting or in-house re-marketing email campaigns

When communicating these instructions, you should utilize the value for your reader to take this action to ensure they continue to receive:

- ▶ Important information about products and services they have purchased
- ▶ Alerts to new products or services that they would be interested in
- ▶ Order confirmation and tracking messages
- ▶ Special offers and special discount codes

Hosted Web Page Versions of Email Message

Another widely used email marketing technique for helping to overcome the image suppression issue is to utilize a hosted Web page version of the email message not widely used by education marketers (only 5% of messages contained this creative element). This technique is generally characterized by a single line of text and a link, generally at the top of an email message that reads something to the effect, “If you are having trouble viewing this message, click here.” If the link is clicked, then the viewer is taken to a Web page, which is an exact replica of the email message they had opened, except all the images are automatically populated. Marketers that make use of graphically rich email messages should really consider employing this technique as it can help to counter the effects of image suppression and provide an easy way to view the message with images.

Technical Characteristics

Image Utilization. One of the important questions that marketers need to address when designing their email campaigns is whether and how to utilize images. Images can make a message more appealing and permit the inclusion of logos and other branding symbols to promote company and product recognition. However, the most commonly used email clients block image loading, particularly from unknown senders. Based on the analysis of the sample of prospecting campaigns, most education marketers have adopted a generally conservative approach to the use of images. About one-fourth of the campaigns studied utilized no images, with two-thirds employing moderate usage (one to three images) and only 12.2% using four or more images.

► **CHART 4.5** Image Utilization by Prospecting Campaigns

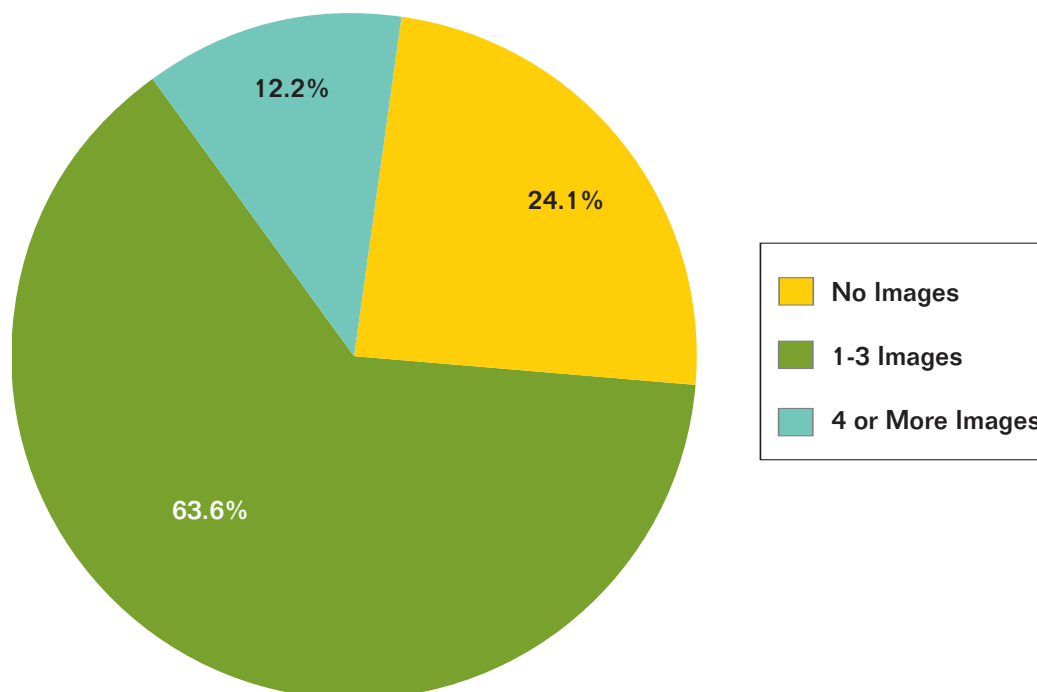


Image Suppression Ready. When reviewing the creative elements used in this sample of campaigns, a determination was made as to whether or not the email creative would survive image suppression. The criteria for survival was that there was sufficient HTML text with enough value proposition so that if the images were not present, there would be something for the reader to see and decide if they wanted to click through to the senders' site. This measure did not take into account the effectiveness of the message without images, which is more subjective and generally varied from campaign to campaign.

Image Map. Campaigns that utilized an image map were also identified. The definition of an HTML image map is a single, large image with various coordinates on the images designated as clickable regions or hot spots that function like standard HTML links. The advantages of image maps are providing a very graphically pleasing creative with intuitive and inviting places for the reader to click. The downside of using image maps with the image suppression factor is that with images turned off, not only does the reader not see any of the messaging, they cannot navigate (click-to) to the destination site either. While relatively few campaigns utilize an image map (only 12.5% of the sample analyzed), the data clearly show that image maps result in both lower Open and lower Click-Through rates.

► **TABLE 4.7** Open and Click-Through Rates by Utilization of Image Maps

Utilization	% of Open Rates	% of Click-Through Rates
Did not utilize image map	17.2	3.5
Utilized image map	13.1	1.8

Background Image. Background images are another HTML feature that allow for an image to be shown beneath or behind all the other text or graphics, tables, or other elements of the creative. Background images are not suppressed via Outlook 2003 (but can be suppressed by other ISP-based email systems), so they will appear to the reader even with images turned off. This can provide very graphically pleasing creatives that survive the image suppression issue. It should be noted, however, that background images are not supported by all email readers, including many versions of Outlook prior to 2003. Most importantly, they are not supported by the new Outlook 2007. Marketers may already be taking this into account, since only 8.1% of the campaigns reviewed utilized background images.

Boxed Table Graphic. Two-thirds of the campaigns analyzed made use of HTML tables for creative formatting purposes. With the use of tables, these messages could utilize things such as table cell shading and placing images to either side or above or below text. This is a formatting feature that generally creates a more compact, online viewable presentation than a document-style page layout.

Web Template With Columned Look. This creative category included those emails that displayed a high degree of HTML formatting with characteristics that one would associate with Web pages, such as the use of mastheads, left- or right-hand navigational elements, cascading style sheets (CSS), or other advanced layout elements. Only 5.1% of the campaigns analyzed had this feature.

Lessons Learned From Analysis of Characteristics of 2007 Prospecting Campaigns

This chapter clearly illustrates that there are many different ways that education marketers utilize email. As shown in Table 4.6, email is used for a variety of purposes, such as generating traffic to company Web sites and general branding messages and specific sales offers, invitations to events, surveys, and follow-up to direct mail campaigns. However, the majority of individual campaigns generally were designed to refer to only one service, product, or event.

There is also major variation in the actual messages (subject lines and body text). In general, relatively short subject lines have better Open rates than longer ones, and personalized messages tend to have higher Open rates. If you compare this to traditional direct mail best practices, marketers tend to focus on keeping copy on envelopes short and directive, while leveraging brand recognition for best results—similar to the subject line results we see here. The proven model of a longer mail letter being more effective than a shorter mail letter doesn't seem to appear true for email. But that model was proven out over decades of testing, with the guiding principle “to make the letter as long as it needs to be.” Since the nature of email has made us all less patient and eager to quickly scan for the value of a message, shorter messages seem to be more effective. But testing is still a priority in this young medium, and we have had customers in the not-for-profit and association worlds share that longer offers have driven equally strong results.

While individual campaigns (their objectives and specific product or service offers) differ in many ways and their targeted audiences may have different reactions to certain messages, the data in this chapter suggest some basic questions that education marketers should consider.

- ▶ What is the single most important objective for the campaign? Is it trying to accomplish too many things?
- ▶ Will the subject line draw in readers? In many cases, short is more effective than long.
- ▶ Can the message be personalized?
- ▶ Have you used an appropriate mix of images and text?

Dealing With the Image Suppression Issue. We have seen that a majority of education marketers have taken the image suppression issue to heart and have done a good job to create effective email creatives that survive image suppression. However, the lack of hosted Web page versions of their email message as well as the lack of add to address book instructions and the continued presence of large image map-based creatives shows that there is still some opportunity to address this issue with some marketers.

Many education email marketers have taken email creative seriously, dedicating resources and effort to create email creative from the ground up, specifically for online use. They have discovered the effectiveness of some advanced techniques for dealing with the image suppression issue, such as background images, and they have worked to clarify and refine their value proposition and relevance to the reader into a digitally viewable, easily understood and actionable format (it should be noted that when Outlook 2007 starts to show in schools in the years to come, you will have to adjust your creative again, as it won't support some features now supported in Outlook 2003, such as background images). These marketers are enjoying increased success in their email marketing efforts and demonstrating that increased ROI can be achieved with some investment and focus on this ever-growing part of their overall marketing mix.

About the Authors

Gretchen W. Rigol

Gretchen W. Rigol is a nationally recognized education professional, with more than 35 years of experience working with educational organizations. During her 25-year career with the College Board, she managed most of the Board's popular programs and services, including the PSAT/NMSQT and SAT. Among the positions she held at the College Board were Vice President for higher education; international and special services; and guidance, access, and assessment services. She has also worked at Pratt Institute, Goucher College, and Mount Holyoke College. Recent publications include *Admissions Decision-Making Models: How U.S. Institutions of Higher Education Select Undergraduate Students* and a summary of the proceedings of *College Board Seminars on the Implications of the U.S. Supreme Court Decisions in the University of Michigan Admissions Cases*.

Currently an independent consultant and free-lance writer, Gretchen can be reached at 917-952-8323 or through email at grigol@nyc.rr.com.

Christopher Ziemnicki

Christopher Ziemnicki currently leads e-marketing product development at MDR. Chris also acts as chief strategic consultant on interactive marketing to MDR's customers and leads MDR's industry-leading educational e-marketing research and best practices efforts. Before joining MDR, Chris built and managed large-scale Web affiliate marketing programs and managed email marketing programs for both start-up and established B2C companies and catalogers. As a current member of the Email Experience Council, Chris is a strong advocate for education marketers' e-marketing programs and general email marketing best practices.

Chris can be reached at 203-225-4725 or cziemnicki@dnb.com.

About MDR

MDR is the market's first choice for marketing information and services for the K-12, higher education, library, early childhood, and related education markets. Powered by the most complete, current, and accurate education databases available in the industry, MDR provides direct mail lists, email contacts and deployment, sales contact and lead solutions, custom market research, and market trend analysis. MDR also publishes a variety of research reports, including *Educator Buying Trends: A National Survey*, *The College Technology Review*, the *Enrollment Comparison Report*, and *Public School Expenditures*. When business objectives call for growth, market leaders call on MDR.

MDR, a D&B Company, is headquartered in Shelton, Connecticut, with regional offices in Chicago and San Francisco.



800-333-8802

mdrinfo@dnb.com

www.schooldata.com

Eastern Region

| 6 Armstrong Road · Shelton, CT 06484

† 203-926-4800

Midwest Region

| 20 South Clark Street · Suite 2100 · Chicago, IL 60603

† 312-263-4169

Western Region

| 150 Spear Street · Suite 1300 · San Francisco, CA 94105

† 415-278-5250