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# 8 Reasons Why Email is Still the Killer App – For Now

by [Pam Neely](#) March 3, 2016



👍 6

▲ Interesting

▼ Not Interesting

*Email is the oldest technology of the Internet. It's even older than the Internet itself, if you define "the Internet" as when the government computer network known as ARPANET first started passing information via TCP/IP. That wonkitude happened all the way back in 1983. By then, email was already five years old.*

*Yep – email was born way back in 1978. It was created by [V.A. Shiva Ayyadurai](#), who was 14 at the time (darn teenagers). He built it on assignment. The University of Medicine and Dentistry of Newark, New Jersey asked him to create an electronic version of their mail system.*

*Seems like a long way back, right? I mean, in Internet time, there might as well have been a Triceratops wandering around Newark while Shiva pondered his task. But now, with our spiffy Facebook and Twitter and mobile apps, none of that old school stuff matters, right?*

*Not so fast.*

*Email is still alive and well. It's still the technology to beat. That's true whether you're trying to collaborate with coworkers, sell stuff, reach an important person, or keep an audience engaged. Like it, love it or hate it, email is still the killer app.*

*Will it be the killer app forever? Probably not. But email's reign is [not yet over](#). And it's got several things built into its DNA that might keep it in the top spot for another 38 years.*

## 1. Email is used by everybody.

*There is no other digital technology as widely used as email. Social media is definitely coming up fast, but it still hasn't beat out email in terms of global users.*

*The Radicati Group's report on the number of email and social media accounts shows email still ahead – and staying ahead – until 2018. And that assumes social media will hold its rapid growth of 9% a year.*

## 2. Email is [mobile friendly](#), if not mobile native.

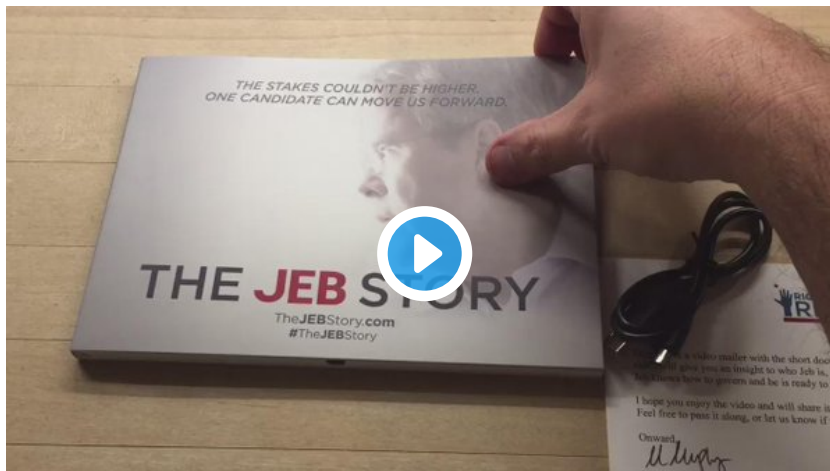
When you consider the long-term life of any Internet technology, measure it by mobile. Mobile isn't just where we're headed; most of the world is already there.

It's smart strategy to build for how things will be two, three, or five years from now. It's even smarter to think 10 or 20 years out, but I'll leave that to the billionaires. As a marketer, I just want to make sure I've got the skills to shine two or three years from now. Hopefully I'll also have the content and technology edge to beat my competitors to the punch.

### 3. Email has crazy-high return on investment.

Have you seen that stat about how email marketing has a 4300% ROI? It's a few years old now. I prefer the most recent 2800% stat, also from the [DMA](#), but from their 2015 report.

The reason email's ROI is so crazy high is because it's so affordable. Especially compared to print, advertising, or almost anything else. It's practically free compared to \$40 video mailers...



**Doug Palardy**  
@djpalardy



What will likely be the most talked about mailer in the '16 election.

[@JebBush](#) [#nhpolitics](#) [#FITN](#) [#strategy](#) [@politico](#)

5:13 PM - 18 Jan 2016



### 4. Email is affordable.

This is one of the best things about email. Small businesses can now easily build an [email list](#) and send attractive and mobile-friendly emails out to their subscribers. They can even track the results and test which tactics work best. Dollar for dollar, that's one of the best communication tools – and one of the best deals –around.

### 5. Email can be customized, personalized and segmented ... easily.

The days of mass communications are pretty much over. Now, we niche out our audiences (and call them personas) to send them highly customized, targeted messages. And they expect us to. At this point, the customer is savvy enough to know we've got their information. And if we've got it, they expect us to use it. And use it to their benefit.

Once again, email can handle this. Beautifully. Marketing Automation providers offer segmentation, automation, and personalization capabilities that would have made the marketers of 50 years ago (or even 10 years ago) shout with glee. Now, your clever intern can knock that stuff out in an hour.

### 6. People actually prefer to get commercial messages via emails.

Say all you want about spam. There's still no reason for email marketers to feel so down on themselves; people actually want

companies to communicate with them via email.

Last year [MarketingSherpa](#) asked 2,057 American adults, “In which of the following ways, if any, would you prefer companies to communicate with you? Please select all that apply.” Here’s how they replied:

## 7. Email is video friendly.

In the digital marketing of the future, only two things are for sure:

- There will be mobile
- There will be [video](#)

Email works for both. And videos in email work whether your subscriber has an email client that supports embedded videos or not (see below).

Worried about embedding a video in your emails? Then don’t. Just make an image that looks like a video and link it to a landing page where the real video plays automatically.

## 8. Email can learn new tricks.

Maybe it’s dynamic content. Or live forms inside an email. Or order buttons right within an email. All those things aren’t just coming – they’re already here. And there are already successful case studies out there to boost your confidence to try these new things.

First up: dynamic content. This takes personalization and segmentation to a whole new level. It does the same for engagement rates, too.

Dynamic content means you can customize content based on:

- The weather where a subscriber is (sell umbrellas... or bikinis... or mittens?)
- A subscriber’s city, state or zip code (as in the map below)
- Past purchase or download history
- Where they are in the [sales funnel](#)
- Much, much more

This fab example of a dynamic email is from [Email on Acid’s](#) blog post, [10 Best Ways to Use Dynamic Content in Email](#). This particular campaign increased online traffic 250% over the mailer’s historic average results.

Emails can also be interactive. They can do mouseover effects, like this:

Image is from [FreshInbox’s](#) blog post, [Rollover Images in Email: Brown Bag Clothing and DirectTV](#).

And they can let the user enter information into simple forms, like this:

Example is from [RebelMail’s](#) blog post, [Announcing RebelMail](#).

There’s even talk of letting customers choose product variations and place an order from within an [email](#). They might look something like this:

Those are all B2C examples, but don’t tune them out if you’re in B2B. You could let people mouseover an eBook cover to learn more information about it. Or let them mouseover a speaker’s headshot to see their bio.

## Conclusion

Email definitely has a lot of competition for its title as the killer app. But for now, it’s holding steady. Thanks to widespread use, and its affinity with mobile and video, email is ready for wherever marketing wants to go. At least for the next few years. And so long as it can evolve, there’s no reason it should ever die.

Now it's up to us to push our marketing to evolve along with it.

## Back to you

Do you think email still deserves to be called the killer app? If not, why not? Share your thoughts in the comments.

Email is still one of the most used and most successful digital marketing tactics. But it's moving fast, and most email programs are only scratching the surface of possibilities. Are you using those new adaptations to gain ground on your competition?

Download Act-On's, "[Email Idea Lab](#)," to learn six ideas that will take your email campaigns to the next level.

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