

eDirect Specifications

CASL Requirements:

All outgoing emails must contain the following to be CASL compliant:

- A mailing address and either phone number, email or web address
- The identity of all third parties and third party info

Please make sure to provide this information within your email creative

HTML file:

- Email creative must be an **html file**. Keep coding as simple as possible. HTML coded for a website won't necessarily work for an email. Should be no wider than 700 pixels (industry standard is 600 pixels).
- Creative can be coded using colspans, but we recommend using a **stacked table structure** since it is more stable across all email clients.
- To ensure paragraph spacing renders more consistently across ISP's please style <p> tags accordingly.
- **Do not use CSS for layout** (e.g. using <div> tags). **Inline stylesheets** can be used to format text, but we recommend using regular HTML font formatting for guaranteed universal acceptance.
- **Graphics:** Graphics and images should be provided in jpeg or gif format. **Background images and image maps should be avoided;** many email clients and spam filters will block them or are unsupported. Images may be hosted by you or us. All images **must** have ALT tags filled out.
- **Fonts:** Please ensure the font attribute is included in all content (<p>) tags. Some email clients "strips" the text of the intended font without it.
- French characters must be **hard-coded**.
- **Do not use Java, JavaScript, frames or ActiveX** since most email clients will not accept it.
- **Do not use Flash** within an eblast. If Flash is required for the campaign, consider directing the user to a hosted landing page to view the Flash piece.
- **Do not use** HTML forms in the body of the email.
- **Do not use Microsoft Word's 'Save as HTML' feature.** Files converted using Word has proprietary code that can alter many third party email clients. We cannot accept code that has been created in this manner.
- **Do not use a third party email vendor's software** to create your HTML file (e.g. Constant Contact, MailChimp, Campaigner, CheetahMail, etc.). Again, proprietary code/tracking can alter the look and function of your eblast. We cannot accept code that has been created in this manner.
- Broadcast emails **may not** contain attachments.

If you cannot code HTML according to the specs above, we would prefer that you layout your e-mail in Word so that we can produce the HTML markup for you. See next page. (Creative fee of \$175 may apply for design.)

Creative

- Featured content and navigation should also appear “Above-the-Fold”. The average measurement for this area is 420 pixels in height.
- The entire template design should be encased in a 1-pixel border. This will “seal-off” the template and present it as a unified design element to the user.
- Clear “calls-to-action” should be used to designate clickable areas. Testing has shown the users react better to graphical buttons rather than textual links.

Microsoft Word:

If you are unable to supply the creative in HTML format, you can send your copy in a Word document. (Creative fee of \$175 may apply for design.)

- Use Word's formatting tools to show how you would like the text formatted.
- Embed the images in the Word document to show layout, etc.
- Please also provide any images used as separate attachments as well.
- We will produce the HTML and format to match your document as closely as possible.

Delivery Checklist:

Deliver these items **five (5) business days** before send date. Please submit **FINAL** artwork/material.

- .HTML file
- Subject line
- Zipped folder containing all images (required if we are hosting your images). We upload the images from your email to our server.
- Text backing (optional)

eDirect Specifications: Details

Formatting Recommendations: Technical

JavaScript:

Javascript is supported by all web browsers, but not all email clients. Since this is the case, it is recommended that JS is not used so that the email is universally accepted.

Forms:

Forms may be used in emails as long as they don't include JavaScript functionality and aren't mailed to AOL or Hotmail users since they don't support form functionality. Since email clients, most notably Mac Mail and Outlook 2007, don't support forms at all, it's important to provide the user with a link to a hosted version of the form.

Troubleshooting the HTML:

Always check your code on Firefox, and IE, as well as on both the PC and MAC platforms. Make sure to close all HTML tags as leaving off `</td>`, `</tr>`, `</table>`, `</body>`, `</HTML>` tags are the root of most HTML email problems. These errors will cause email clients and browsers to read your email differently. What might look perfect in Internet Explorer may look vastly different on Firefox.

Also, be aware of browser limitations and use universally supported HTML tags rather than tags that are browser specific. Always include both height and width tags to specify image sizes as well as table cell dimensions.

Header Tags:

Avoid the use of any header tags (any tag above `<body>`), as web-based email systems, such as Hotmail and Yahoo!, replace all header tags with their own HTML code. This also includes cascading stylesheets (CSS).

Rowspans and Colspans:

Avoid the use of rowspans when coding your HTML email. They will not display correctly in several email clients, including: Lotus Notes, AOL, and Outlook 2007. Use colspans only, or nested tables instead.

ALT Tags:

Adding an ALT tag to your image tags will ensure that if, by chance, any images are broken when a subscriber receives your email, your subscriber will have an idea of what is missing. ALT tags also satisfy accessibility issues, conform to W3C HTML 4.01 specs, and allow the disabled to read and receive their emails.

Formatting Recommendations: Creative

Preview Pane Area:

Outlook's preview pane window is a commonly overlooked element in email designs. The designer only has, at the most, 300 pixels of height to present the email's main content and navigation to an Outlook user. In this case, since the user doesn't have to open the email to preview its content, this section should communicate the main message of the email quickly and efficiently.

Above-the-Fold Area:

The area that appears above the browser's bottom window bar is called the "Above-the-Fold" area. This is especially important for browser-based email clients such as Hotmail and Yahoo!. The "Above-the-Fold" section on a 17" monitor with a resolution of 800 x 600 is 420 pixels in height. In most cases, these extra 120 pixels of space are used for content that supports the preview pane area design. It is important to note that this area should be visually engaging as well, since this is the first thing Hotmail and Yahoo! users will see when they open the email.

Calls-to-action (CTA):

CTA phrases like "Click here to..." or "Read more..." let the user know what they can click on and what content will be behind the link. CTAs aid users in making content and navigation decisions and generally guide them around the design. Break the phrases out visually using a heavier font weight or slightly different color.

Email File Size and Physical Dimensions:

We recommend that an HTML email's width does not exceed 720 pixels. This will leave ample room for elements like Hotmail and Outlook's navigation bars. Anything wider will push some of the email's content off the user's screen and force him/her to scroll horizontally to uncover it.

Stylesheets:

We recommend using inline stylesheets to format text. You can also use regular HTML to control how text in the design looks.

Navigation:

It is very important to give the user complete control of how they view the email's content and interact with its navigation. For emails that have a lot of content, we recommend using "same-page" navigation. This will allow users to jump right to the content they want to read and will not make them scroll down the email to uncover it.

In addition, provide some alternate navigation in the email for the user who doesn't find the content interesting. This navigation could be in the form of external links to a website. The more options the user has, the better. Content that's located within the first 420 pixels of the email will be initially presented to the user without requiring them to scroll down.

HTML Coding by Email Client

Gmail:

- Flash does not work and cannot be loaded.
- We recommend you speak with your Account Manager prior to sending a mailing using Flash.
- Mailings using colspans AND rowspans rendered correctly.
- Mailings using ONLY colspans rendered correctly.
- Simple forms like a poll, or ZIP code search submit their values correctly as long as there's a script on the main site that will parse the information, and no javascript is used.
- Javascript doesn't work and should not be used.
- Emails with a file size of 100k will make it to the inbox.
- Stylesheets used in the header area of the HTML document WON'T work.
- External stylesheets, or a referenced stylesheet (.css) file that is located on an external server, WILL NOT work.
- Image mapping works properly.
- Inline stylesheets render correctly inside the body of the HTML document, but a style should be made for the links in the email so that they don't default to Gmail's link style.
- HTML entities (& for &) work correctly in both their text and numerical forms.
- Single background images defined in the <td> tag will appear, while background images defined in the <body> tag do not.

Yahoo:

- Flash does not work and cannot be loaded.
- We recommend you speak with your Account Manager prior to sending a mailing using Flash.
- Mailings using colspans AND rowspans rendered correctly.
- Simple forms like a poll, or ZIP code search submit their values correctly as long as there's a script on the main site that will parse the information, and no javascript is used.
- Javascript doesn't work and should not be used.
- Stylesheets used in the header area of the HTML document WILL work.
- External stylesheets, or a referenced stylesheet (.css) file that is located on an external server, WILL NOT work.
- Emails with a file size of 100k will make it to the inbox.
- Inline stylesheets render correctly inside the body of the HTML document, but a style should be made for the links in the email so that they don't default to Yahoo!'s link style.
- Image maps function properly.
- Single background images defined in the <td> tag will appear, while background images defined in the <body> tag do not.

Hotmail:

- Flash does not work and mailing will instead be placed in the junk folder.
- Single background images defined in the <td> tag will appear, while background images defined in the <body> tag do not.
- Mailings using colspans AND rowspans rendered correctly.
- Mailings using ONLY colspans rendered correctly.
- Forms do not work and will not submit their results.
- Javascript doesn't work and should not be used.
- Emails with a file size of 100k will make it to the inbox.
- Image maps function properly.

- Stylesheets used in the header area of the HTML document WON'T work since Hotmail's main stylesheet overwrites the entire head tag.
- External stylesheets, or a referenced stylesheet (.css) file that is located on an external server, WILL NOT work.
- Inline stylesheets render correctly inside the body of the HTML document, but a style should be made for the links in the email so that they don't default to Hotmail's link style.

Lotus Notes:

- Flash does not work and cannot be loaded.
- Using too many images or images that are too large can cause them to be misconfigured.
- Lotus Notes does not support forms.
- Lotus Notes strips out JavaScript (may vary by version).
- Mailings using colspans AND rowspans do not render correctly.
- Lotus Notes strips out stylesheets (may vary by version).

AOL:

- Flash does not work and cannot be loaded.
- We recommend you speak with your Account Manager prior to sending a mailing using Flash.
- Background images can be used as long as user clicks to view images.
- Mailings using colspans AND rowspans render correctly.
- Mailings using ONLY colspans will render correctly.
- Form functionality will not work.
- 100k test email reverted to showing the rich-text version instead of the HTML template.
- Javascript doesn't work and should not be used.
- Emails with a file size of 100k will make it to the inbox.
- Stylesheets used in the header area of the HTML document won't work.
- Inline stylesheets render correctly inside the body of the HTML document.
- Image maps work correctly.
- Webmail version of AOL will convert all HTML files over 35k to rich text.

Outlook/MAC Mail:

- Flash will work, but the user will need to activate their "Active X" controls in the options menu.
- Image maps work correctly.
- Background images can be used as long as user clicks to view images.
- Mailings using colspans AND rowspans render correctly.
- Javascript doesn't work and should not be used.
- Simple forms like a poll, or ZIP code search submit their values correctly as long as there's a script on the main site that will parse the information, and no javascript is used.
- Emails with a file size of 100k will make it to the inbox.
- Stylesheets used in the header area of the HTML document work properly.
- External stylesheets, or a referenced stylesheet (.css) file that is located on an external server, render the emails content correctly.
- Inline stylesheets render correctly inside the body of the HTML document.

Outlook 2007:

- Flash WILL NOT work. Consider sending users to a hosted page where Flash SWFs will be able to play.
- No support for forms regardless of how simple they are.
- Background images will not load, and should not be used.
- No support for replacing bullets with images in unordered lists.
- No support for animated GIFs.
- Poor support for table cell background colors.
- Stylesheets located in the <head> area of the HTML documents will not render properly. Consider using inline stylesheets, or plain HTML text to format fonts.

Coding Summary

- Flash only works in Pre-2007 Outlook/MAC Mail.
- Emails can have a width of 700 pixels and still be fully visible on a 17-inch monitor.
- Javascript does not work and should not be used within an HTML email.
- Email can have a maximum file size of 100k and still make it to the inbox except in AOL webmail where rich-text will load in place of the HTML version.
- Inline stylesheets work across all major ESPs.
- HTML entities (& for &) work correctly in both their text and numerical forms.
- Mailings using only colspans render correctly.
- Image maps work correctly.
- Simple forms like a poll, or ZIP code search submit their values correctly across all ESPs except Hotmail, AOL and Lotus Notes.