

## Myth Debunked: No Such Thing As A Best Day

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By Morgan Stewart  
ExactTarget

The day or time at which you chose to send an email message can have a real impact on response rates. As an email strategist, I'm frequently asked about the latest trends regarding the "best day to send." Conventional wisdom on the topic often changes, and several theories suggest opposing days. So it's no wonder why so many people are looking for the answer!

In 2004, two separate studies were released touting Monday as the best day of the week to send email. The first study, published by ReturnPath, showed that deliverability rates were best for messages sent on Monday. The second study, conducted by eROI and published by MarketingSherpa, suggested that open and click rates are also better on Mondays. Yet prior to these studies, conventional wisdom led marketers to believe that Tuesday was the best day to send email.

ExactTarget recently conducted its own research on the topic. The study analyzed twelve months of historical data, 2000 organizations, 160,000 email campaigns, and 800 million email messages—which makes it the largest amount of data ever analyzed in a study on this topic.

The study focused on metrics measuring customer response, with controls set by basing response rates on the number of messages sent, not messages delivered. The following are the key findings of this study for the period covering December 2003 through November 2004:

**Most marketers send email mid-week.** Over 97% of campaigns are sent Monday through Friday, leaving the weekends wide open for the brave marketers who send campaigns over the weekend.

**Best days for opens are not necessarily the best for clicks.** Comparing results month-by-month shows that there are serious inconsistencies between the best day for opens and the best day for clicks. Marketers need to make a distinction of which they want to drive. Maximizing open rates is important for brand exposure, while generating clicks is the key if the goal is conversion.

**Industry articles may jinx results.** MarketingSherpa published the results of a study in late July stating that the best day of the week to send was Monday. This study was based on the results for Q2 2004. The results of our analysis for Q2 2004 also suggest that Monday was the best day to send in Q2 2004. However, since that report was published, Monday has consistently ranked 5th and 6th in battle for "best day to send" in terms of open rate.

**Wednesday through Friday maximize opens.** Starting in July 2004, the best days for maximizing open rates shifted to later in the work week. For the July through November period, Friday performed the best, but it was less than 0.5% ahead of Wednesday and Thursday in average open rate.

**Weekends rule for generating clicks.** Weekend results are mixed with open rates performing slightly below average, but Sunday and Saturday yield the highest click-through rates respectively. With less competition in the inbox on weekends, people who open your email have more time to actually read and respond to your message.

**Results by industry vary.** The trends highlighted above cover a broad spectrum of industries. When looking at specific industries, differences emerge. High-tech companies fare well on Fridays, membership organizations on Wednesdays, and online retailers drive twice the click-through rates when sending on Sunday.

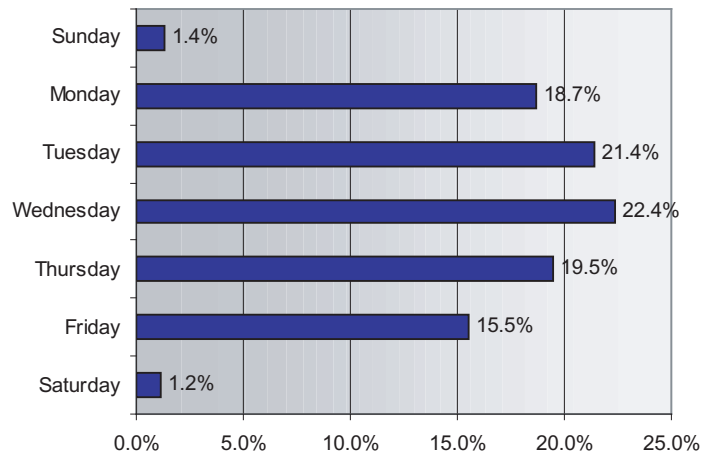
**Inbox competition is alive and well.** Sending at peak times increases competition for attention in the subscriber's inbox. Open and click-through rates are generally lower when more people are sending. For example, in the business services industry, most campaigns are sent on Mondays (nearly one-third of all campaigns for this industry), and Monday open rates are 8% lower than the industry average.

The results of our study indicate that marketers need to rethink the best times for sending email. There is no simple answer to which day is best for sending email. The results vary each month, by industry and by target audience. The notion of a universal "best day to send email" is, at best, a moving target, and at worst a myth.

Instead of following industry trends (including the results outlined in this article), marketers should continue to construct logical hypotheses and validate them by testing the results. Morgan Stewart is Director, Strategic Services for ExactTarget. For additional questions or information on testing and research, you may contact him via email at: [mstewart@exacttarget.com](mailto:mstewart@exacttarget.com).

## Campaigns Sent by Day

(December 2003 - November 2004)



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## Open Rates: Best Days by Month

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
December, 2003			✓				
January, 2004	✓						
February, 2004	✓						
March, 2004	✓						
April, 2004		✓					
May, 2004		✓					
June, 2004		✓					
July, 2004				✓			
August, 2004							✓
September, 2004					✓		
October, 2004						✓	
November, 2004						✓	

## Click-Through Rates: Best Days by Month

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
December, 2003							✓
January, 2004	✓						
February, 2004	✓						
March, 2004	✓						
April, 2004							✓
May, 2004		✓					
June, 2004	✓						
July, 2004	✓						
August, 2004	✓						
September, 2004		✓					
October, 2004							✓
November, 2004	✓						

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