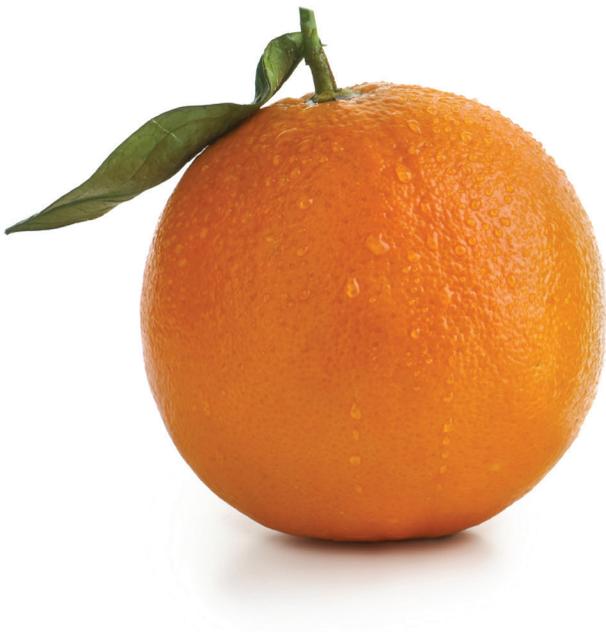


# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE

*to*



A / B TESTING

IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

# INTRODUCTION

Your organization’s messages have a profound impact on people’s daily lives. From health initiatives, to small business benefits, to severe weather warnings, public sector communications make a huge difference – as long as they get read. To ensure the highest percentage of your audience will notice, read, and engage with your organization’s messages, it’s essential to test how people react to your messaging.

This guide explores the best practices of A/B testing your organization’s communications to deliver the most relevant and meaningful experience you can achieve – one captivating enough to best engage your audience and drive them to act.

**In order to change a desired behavior, you must test the effectiveness of your communications.**

## THE CHALLENGES

### 1. A DISTRACTED WORLD

According to Media Dynamics, Inc., the average person encounters up to 5,000 marketing messages and receives around 100 emails per day. With dwindling attention spans and an inundation of messages, capturing the interest and engagement of audience members can be a real challenge.



### 2. KEEPING UP WITH THE TIMES

While brochures, postcards, and other print communications were mainstays of the public sector in the past, today’s organizations are challenged with meeting the needs of modern-day audiences through new digital channels and tools. Unfortunately, many public sector organizations still use antiquated communication methods, while the 21st-century citizen expects first-class, modern, digital communications.

### 3. QUALITATIVE VS. QUANTITATIVE METRICS

According to MarketingSherpa, one-third of marketers do not test frequently. Challenged with organizational directives and goals, how do you know if you have best reached the goals your organization set out, unless you can rely on real data, and vetted messaging?

## THE SOLUTION

Your organization spends massive amounts of time putting together information, services, and programs, to benefit the people it serves. Closing the gap between creation and usage requires refined messaging and communications. It's imperative to create communications that drive interest, engagement, and action – and you can only fully accomplish this by defining and testing your message's variables.

Marketers allocating more of their budgets to optimization tend to have more success with their conversion rate.

[Source: Marketing Charts]

## WHAT IS A/B TESTING?

A/B testing compares two communication variables – side by side – to measure the optimal impact of a message. In an A/B test you set up two variations of a specific campaign and send them to a small percentage of your total recipients. Half of the test group is sent “version A” and the other half is sent “version B”. The winner is then selected by defined success metrics like opens or clicks. Then that version is sent to the remaining audience.

### TURN A FEELING INTO REAL NUMBERS

Qualitative metrics are a communicator's best asset, offering powerful and quantified discoveries about customers. The test findings offer visibility into how well your message impacts your target audience, so you are not just going by a hunch. A/B testing helps to answer:



Who opened your messages



What message is most engaging to your audience



What links generate the most activity



When people engage the most with your message (T.O.D.)



How many topics someone subscribes to



CTAs with the highest conversion rates

Long story short, A/B testing offers a tool to increase engagement among existing audiences through informed measurement. And, with the results, you can view short-term and longitudinal results to optimize your overall communications strategy.

**Real-time Testing:** Do you want to run a report to figure out the optimal way to connect? Send the winning campaign within a set amount of time.

**Long-term Strategy Testing:** Not only does A/B testing give greater visibility into real-world action, it helps accomplish your organizational goals and visibility into high-level insights over time. You can use long-term testing to find trends by comparing two variables head to head on a small segment of your audience. Then, use reporting data or other performance metrics that you find to be the most valuable to share with your team.

# 6 THINGS YOU CAN A/B TEST

## 1. FROM NAME

Do you send an email from an actual individual within your organization? Or a program name? Or do you include your organization's name? The name in the "sent from" field impacts email open rates. Test various options to find the best fit.

## 2. SUBJECT LINE

Different words, phrases, capitalization, and even punctuation impacts email open rates. Test different subject line variations to optimize and improve your email campaign's performance.

## 3. PRE-HEADER TEXT

The short summary of text that follows a subject line of an email can also drastically increase open rates. Summarize or generate interest regarding what the actual email contains by testing pre-header text variations, to optimize email open rates.

## 4. IMAGE

Images contribute to – and deter from – engagement and conversions. Think about it: image size, color, and content can elicit different emotions and impact an audience differently. Test different images (or whether or not to use them at all) within your message so your visual content contributes to its success.

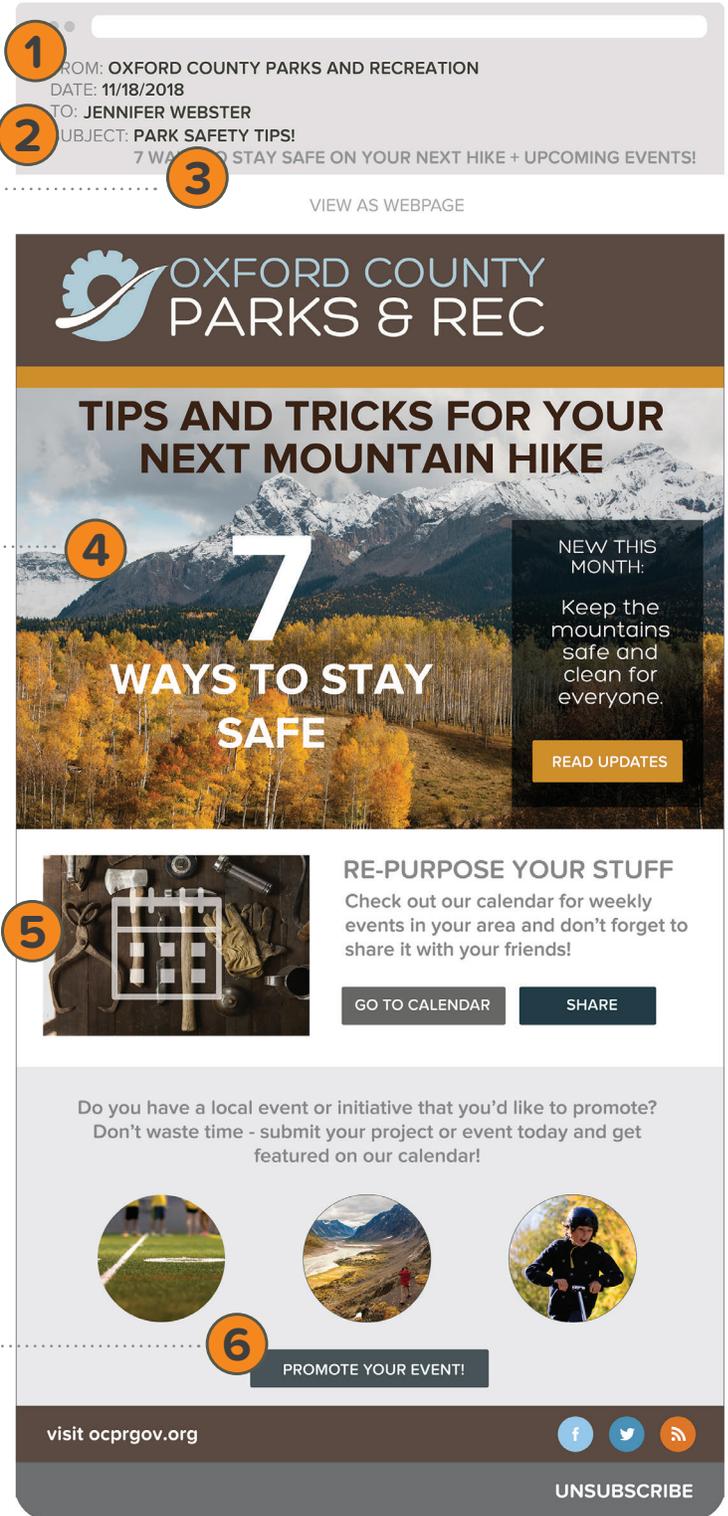
## 5. CONTENT

Email readability, format, and word count factor into how an audience member engages with email content. Create different message variations to see what gets a better response.

## 6. CALL TO ACTION

Determining the best call to action, one that prompts an audience to take immediate action, is crucial to improving email engagement and conversion rates.

Test variations of linked copy, verbiage, buttons (including button color, and placement), all in an effort to impact how your audience acts after they see your message.



## HOW DO YOU A/B TEST?

Can you imagine figuring out the statistical analysis of two variables in an A/B test off the cuff? We simply can't – A/B testing is impossible without the right tools. The GovDelivery Advanced Communications Cloud allows you to test multiple variations of your message to find the winning combination.

While there are many A/B testing technologies available, few are compatible with the public sector. The GovDelivery Advanced Communications Cloud pairs advanced digital communication functions like pre-built campaigns, audience segmentation, analytics, and A/B testing to produce an end-to-end solution for public sector communicators. Plus, with air-tight security, you can rest assured that your organization's private data will never be compromised.

Connecting with citizens – when and how they prefer – is the key to driving engagement and action to your organization's programs and initiatives. Leverage A/B testing to put your citizen-customer first.

## ABOUT GOVDELIVERY

Over 1,000 public sector organizations use GovDelivery's highly-secure cloud solutions every day to enhance the citizen experience for more than 100 million people. GovDelivery offers leading solutions for managing government communications, internal and external learning, and open data. The GovDelivery Network offers a unique and impactful way for public sector organizations to work together to cross promote content and increase digital reach. Organizations using GovDelivery see higher utilization of citizen services and greater citizen engagement.

Make informed decisions through data. Connect with us to learn more about A/B testing and other digital strategies that can work within your communications plan, and help you reach your goals.

**CONNECT**