A/B
TESTING

A/B Testing

Marketers often spend hours to come up with techniques to promote their products. To make sure that their ideas are successful, A/B tests can be run. This way they can gain insights into what works, and what needs work. Whether creating a new landing page to redirect website visitors or sending a promotional email newsletter to contacts, A/B testing is one of the most popular methods of discovery for online marketing strategies.

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Before you start

In this handbook, we'll take you through different facets of A/B testing. But before we get into the details, there are a few basic terms that you should know:

Control - The original version of the campaign.

Variation - The modified version of the campaign.

Element - A test parameter. It can either be the email subject line, sender details, CTA button, or any other content component.

Test - The process of comparing the control and the variation to come up with a clear winner.

Conversion Rate - The rate of performance at which a version (A or B) converts the test group recipients to opens or clicks.

What is A/B testing?

A/B testing (also known as split testing) is a marketing experiment that compares two versions of an email campaign to determine which one performs better. By conducting an A/B test, marketers can statistically analyze which version performs better and works best for their contacts. The version with a higher conversion rate is declared the winner and is sent to the rest of the contacts.
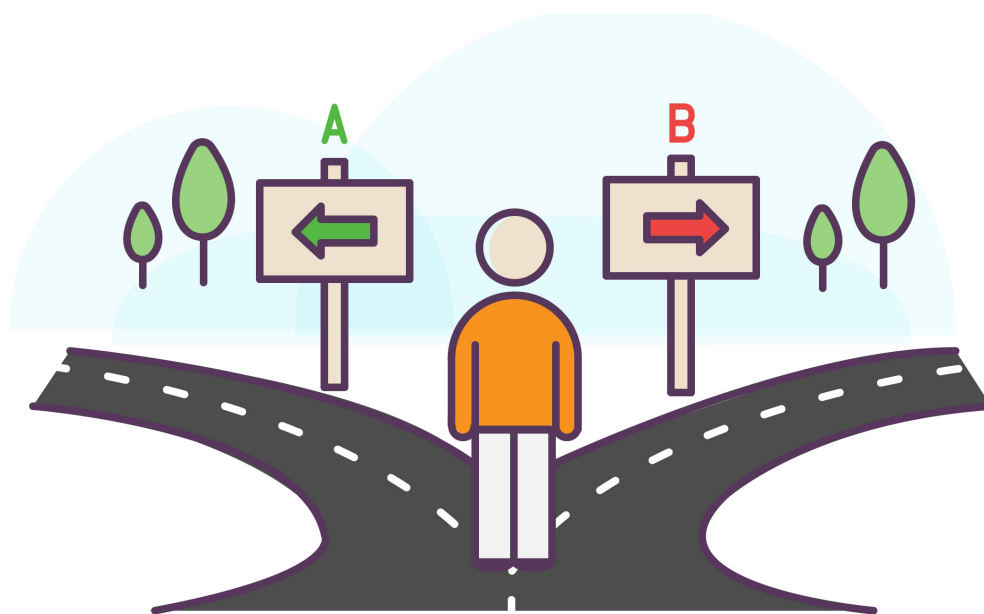
Why A/B testing?

A well-planned A/B test can make a huge difference in the reach of your email campaign. With A/B testing, you can discover the most effective elements of your campaign and come up with a message that best suits the interests and needs of your contacts.

Here are a few reasons to A/B test:

1) Through A/B testing, you can figure out the exact marketing strategy that works best for your company and product.

2) It is an effective way to determine exactly what your contacts want, rather than guessing their needs.

3) With access to all of this information, it is easier to make decisions about conducting your campaigns.

How A/B testing works

In an A/B test, an element of your email campaign is selected and modified as a variant to compare with the original. This change can be anything from a slight tweak in the sender details or subject line, to a complete redesign of the email content. The control version is then sent to one half of the selected test group, while the variant is sent to the other half.

Once an A/B test campaign has been sent, the test group of contacts is monitored for their opens and clicks over time. You can view the open and click rates for each version under A/B Test Reports. The winning version will be sent to the remaining contacts.

Understanding A/B testing

John runs a fine dining restaurant. He is a big fan of email marketing and uses it regularly to connect with his customers. He wants to run a promotional offer on Valentine's Day, and decides to let his customers know through an email campaign. So, he comes up with some campaign content but isn't sure what the best subject line would be.

He has two options:

A : We're making Valentine's Day sweeter
B : You can't get a better gift for your valentine

To zero in on the perfect subject line, he decides to run an A/B test. 40% of his customers receive the test; 20% get Option A (the control), and the other 20% are sent Option B (the variant).

John had a feeling that Option A would perform better than Option B, but once he saw the results, he was quite surprised. Option B beat out option A with a conversion rate of 21%, over Option A's mere 12%.

The winning campaign was then sent to the remaining 60% of his customers. John's restaurant saw an unusually huge turn out on Valentine's Day, and thanks to A/B testing, his profit rates shot up!
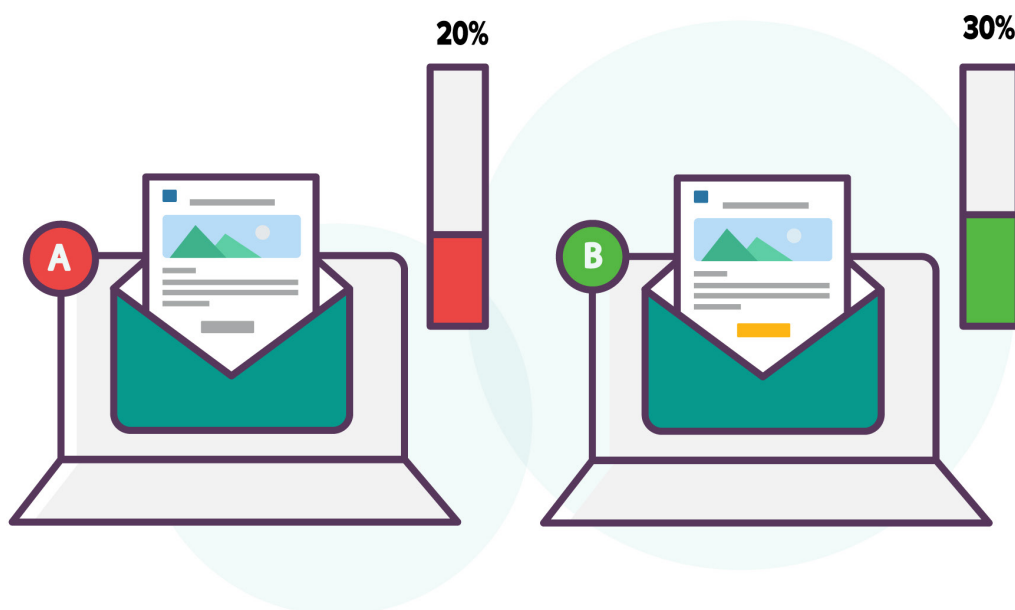
Benefits of A/B testing

Let's take a look at some other ways in which A/B testing can be beneficial to your business.

1) A/B testing blends quantitative and qualitative methods to check content quality.

2) It incorporates your contacts to decide the message your email campaigns will convey.

3) It provides you with a platform to experiment and understand the market trends that influence your contacts.

What to test?

The first step in setting up a successful A/B test is to decide which element to test. You may want to test every element of your campaign, but it is always best to test one element at a time to avoid confusion and get accurate results.

The three variables to test are:

1) Subject line
2) Sender details
3) Content

Subject line

No matter how engaging the content is, your subject line is the element that decides if your email will be opened or not. Most of us wait until we're about to click send to optimize our subject line, but ultimately it's the first thing that catches your contact's eye. It is certainly worth investing some time to write and test your subject lines. The core idea of a subject should remain the same, but small variations in phrases can be made between the two versions of your email campaign.

Sender details

By testing the sender names, marketers can easily match the perfect sender name with their target audience. For your campaign to succeed, you should use an authentic sender name that your contacts can relate to. A/B testing helps you to determine whether to use your brand name, company name, or even your own name. Sometimes you might even want to forget the name and stick to email addresses.

Email content

Quality content attracts quality contacts, but how do you make sure that you have quality content in your campaigns? You can experiment with headlines, images, opt-in forms, calls to action, or literally any other element of your content. The campaign which receives the best response will give you an insight into the type of content you should have in the future campaigns.

Here's a brief list of elements that can be tested in your content:

Headline - The headline is the first thing that grabs your contact's attention and gets them to read further. Experiment with different words, phrases and text sizes to get the best results.

Content Length and Format - The length and format of your content can make a huge difference in the reception of your message. Test out different formats and lengths to see what works best.

Images - The images you use in your content play a vital role in your conversion rate. Test the size and type of images and the optimum number of images.

Call to Action Text and Position- The text and position of your call to action can have a surprising impact on your conversion rate. Make sure to test a few different words and positions for better results.

Call to Action Style - The style of your call to action depends on whether its a link or a button, it's size and the color used. Test these elements individually for accurate results.


Creating your first A/B test campaign

In an A/B test, you'll select and revise elements of your email campaign.This change can be anything from a slight tweak in your sender details and subject line to a complete redesign of the email content. Send the control (original version) to one half of the test group and the variant to the other half.

To set up an A/B test:

1. Select Campaigns from the navigation bar and choose Advanced Campaigns.
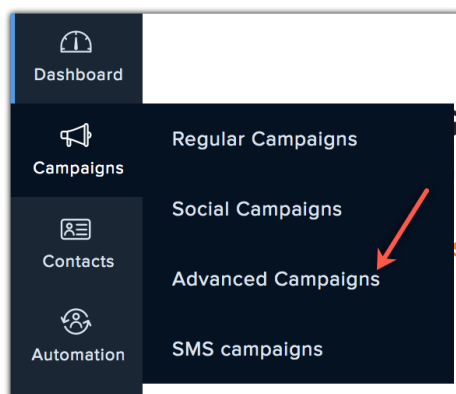
2. Click Create Campaign in the top-right corner of the screen.

3. Hover over the A/B Testing category and click Create New.

4. Fill out the following information on the A/B Test Setup page:

   - Name
   - Subject Line
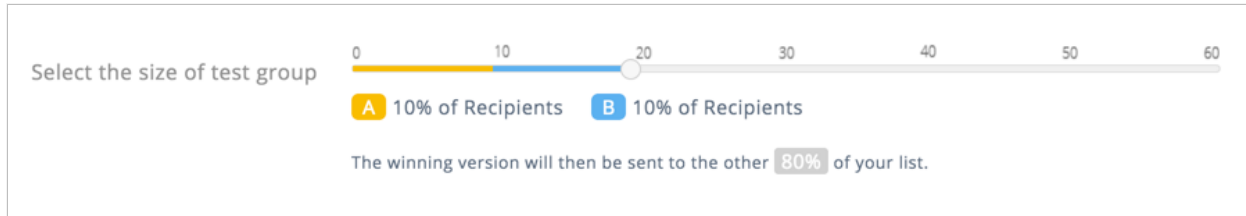   - Sender Details
   - Campaign Content

5. Select which aspect of your email to experiment with. You have three options:

   - Subject line
   - Sender details
   - Campaign content

6.   Choose the proportion of recipients to receive each campaign.
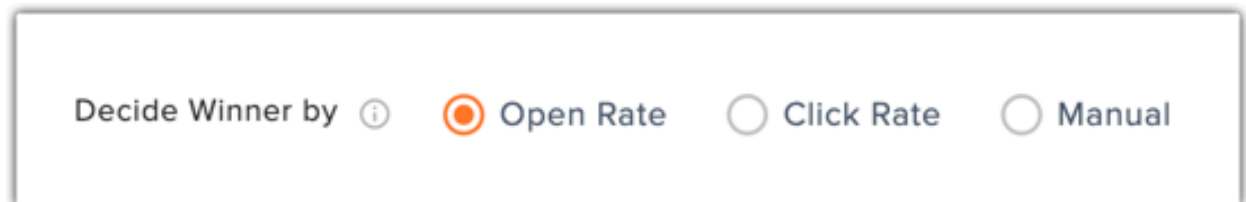
7.   Decide how the winner will be selected from the following three options:

Based on Open Rate - The version with the highest open rate will be the winner.

Based on Click Rate - The version with the highest click-through rate will be the winner.

Manually – Manually select the winning version from A/B test reports.

8.   Select the test duration. You can also opt to manually select the duration while the test is still in progress by visiting the detail view page of an A/B test campaign.

9. Click Next. The next steps will vary, depending on your previous selections.

Variants

Using subject or sender details as the test element:

1.   Enter the subject line or sender details for both versions, depending on the test element you selected in the setup page.

2.   Select a sender email address from the dropdown list.

3.   Select a reply-to address for the contact to respond to.

4.   Click Next to proceed.

Using content as the test element

1.   Enter two different content versions in the text areas.

2. Click Next to proceed.

Content Configuration

1. From the Content Configuration page, select either HTML & Plain Text or HTML only as your email type.

2. Choose a content option from the following selections:

Templates - Design an HTML email using our template layouts.

Import/Upload - Import an existing HTML email and images as a .zip file.
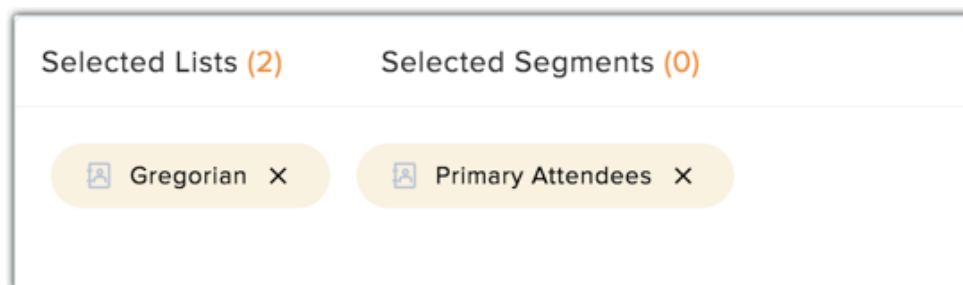
HTML Editor - Design an HTML email using our HTML editor.

Import from cloud - Import content from various cloud storage services.

3. Click Next.

Choose Recipients

Finally, select a mailing list or segment to receive your campaign, and click Proceed.

The A/B test campaign will now be sent for review. Once the review is complete, you can send the campaign.

A/B test reports

Once an A/B test campaign has been sent, the test group will be monitored for their opens and clicks. You can view the metrics for each version under A/B Test Reports. The winning version will be sent to the remaining contacts.
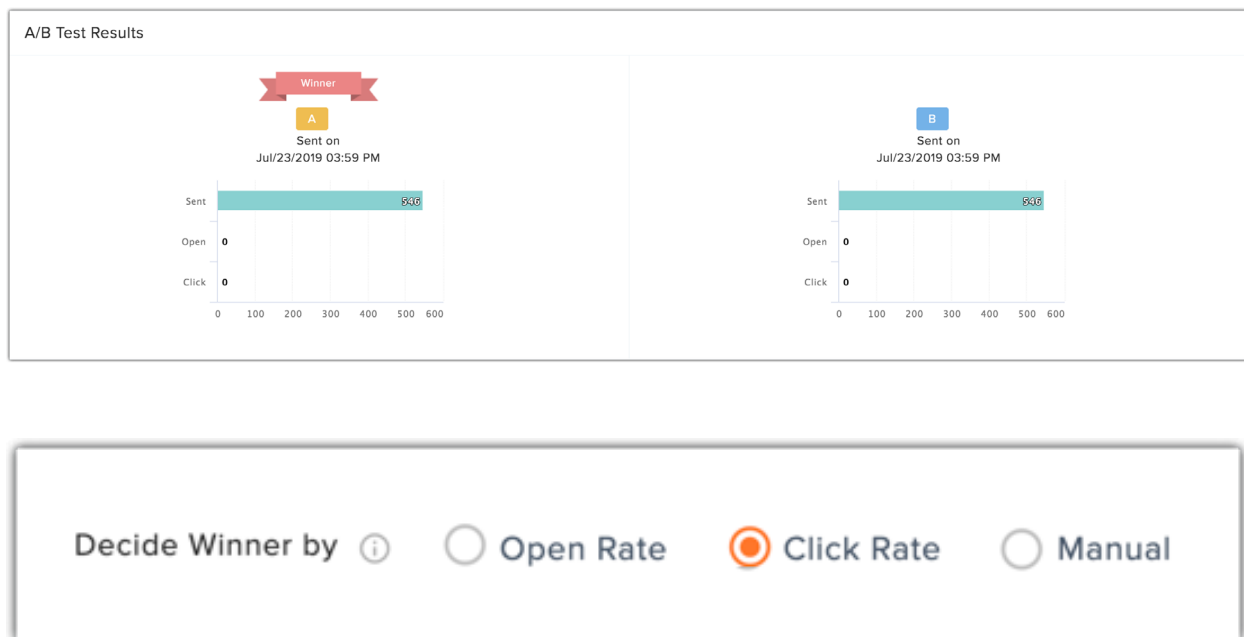
Note: If you chose Manual in the A/B test setup page, go to A/B test reports after the test is sent, and choose a winner.

To access A/B test reports:

1. Select Reports from the navigation bar and choose Sent Campaigns.
2. Select the A/B test campaign you wish to view.
3. Click A/B test Reports.

A/B testing - best practices

Test everything - Is your email on trend? Will it work for your contacts? Will it convert or flop? Testing every element of your campaign will give you insights into your audience and will let you improve your campaigns. What works for your competitor might not work for you, so test away!

Test in advance - An A/B test should be your first step when considering a change to your email campaign. There is no point in going too far with a new strategy until you find out whether it's likely to improve your results.

Trust the results - If the test results are not what you expected, resist the urge to listen to your instincts. A controlled A/B test is always more accurate than an opinion.

Learn from results - When an A/B test gives you a clear winner, your first step is to send the winning campaign to the remaining contacts in the list, but don't stop there. Now that you know what works best for your contacts, you can apply the changes to other campaigns as well.

Keep testing - One test is not sufficient to achieve maximum results. You need to keep experimenting to keep up with your contacts. There's no such thing as a perfect email campaign; every campaign you send can be better than the previous one.

Frequently asked questions

1. How do I create a chain campaign for all my contacts who've left the A/B campaign unopened?

It is not possible to create chain campaigns for an A/B test. However, you can export the unopened contacts, import them to a new mailing list, and send the campaign to those recipients.

To export unopened contacts:

1. Click Reports and select A/B campaign.
2. Click Recipient Activity, select Unopened and choose Export.

2. How do I clone my A/B campaign?

You can clone your A/B campaign by following these instructions:

1. From the Email Campaigns page, click the Filter icon.
2. Hover over the A/B campaign you've chosen and click Clone.

3. Can I select A/B test campaign recipients based on numbers rather than a percentage?

It is not possible to select the recipients by the number of contacts. Recipients may only be selected by percentage.

4. Is it possible to pause an A/B test?

Yes, it is possible to pause an A/B test when it is in the 'In Progress' stage. To pause an A/B test, open your campaign and select the Detailed View.From there, click on the Pause button in the top-right corner. You can resume the test whenever you want by clicking Restart.

5. Is it possible to stop or cancel an A/B test?

No, it is not possible to stop or cancel an A/B Campaign.

6. After sending a campaign for A/B testing, can I decide the winner manually before the campaign is sent to the remaining contacts?

Yes, you can manually select the winner and send the email campaign to your remaining recipients.

7. If both A & B score equally - who will be the winner for the resulting campaign?

If both the versions A and B score equally, then it is a 'Tie'. In this case, the test remains inconclusive and you will have to choose between one of these options

Version A - Send version A to the remaining contacts.

Version B - Send version B to the remaining contacts.

Manual - Choose the winning campaign to be sent.
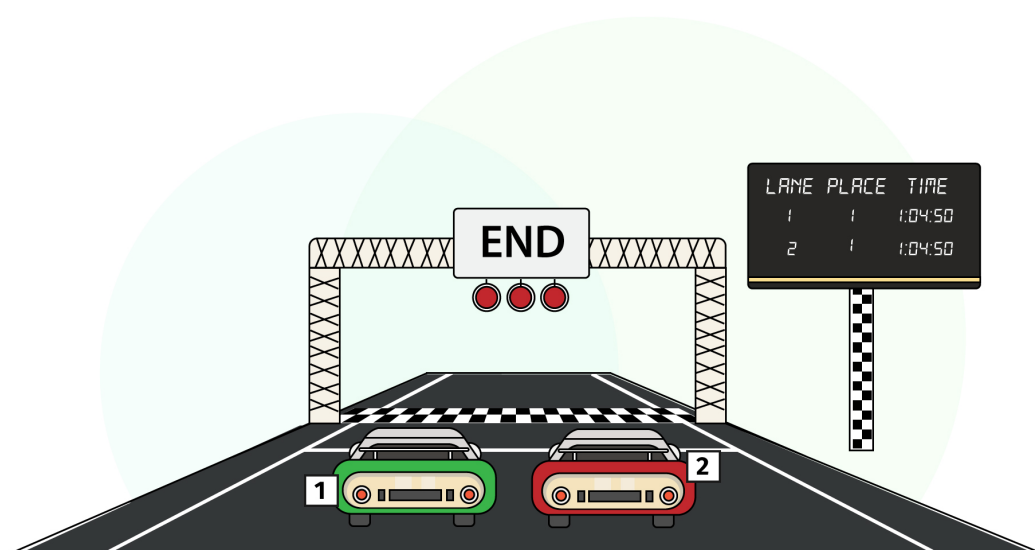
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