



Swim
England

Understanding membership email engagement

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for trees

A Wood for Trees case study

Key benefits

- Insight into, and categorisation of, the membership base and email campaigns
- Understanding of which member cohorts are the most engaged and what email content most resonates
- Proactive and strategic approach to email content planning and more robust and reliable data reporting
- Increasing brand awareness, delivering more value to members and ensuring they gain the most from the membership programme



Overview

Swim England is the national governing body for swimming in England, encouraging people to learn how to swim, enjoy water safely and compete in water sports.

The membership organisation sought a better understanding of who their members are and who are the most engaged, particularly with email journeys.

Internal stakeholders wanted to improve their email campaign planning and reporting to instil a more proactive approach to content creation, ensure members receive relevant information and encourage more engagement with the membership programme.

Through a Wood for Trees foundation audit, Swim England's membership base and email campaigns were analysed and categorised to deliver actionable insight.

Email engagement is high across all member cohorts but, surprisingly, smaller groups of disciplines such as divers and water polo players are just as engaged, if not more so, than swimmers.

Welcome emails offer a good indication of ongoing email engagement. Three quarters of Swim England members open their welcome emails and are twice as likely to continue engaging with emails than those who don't open it.

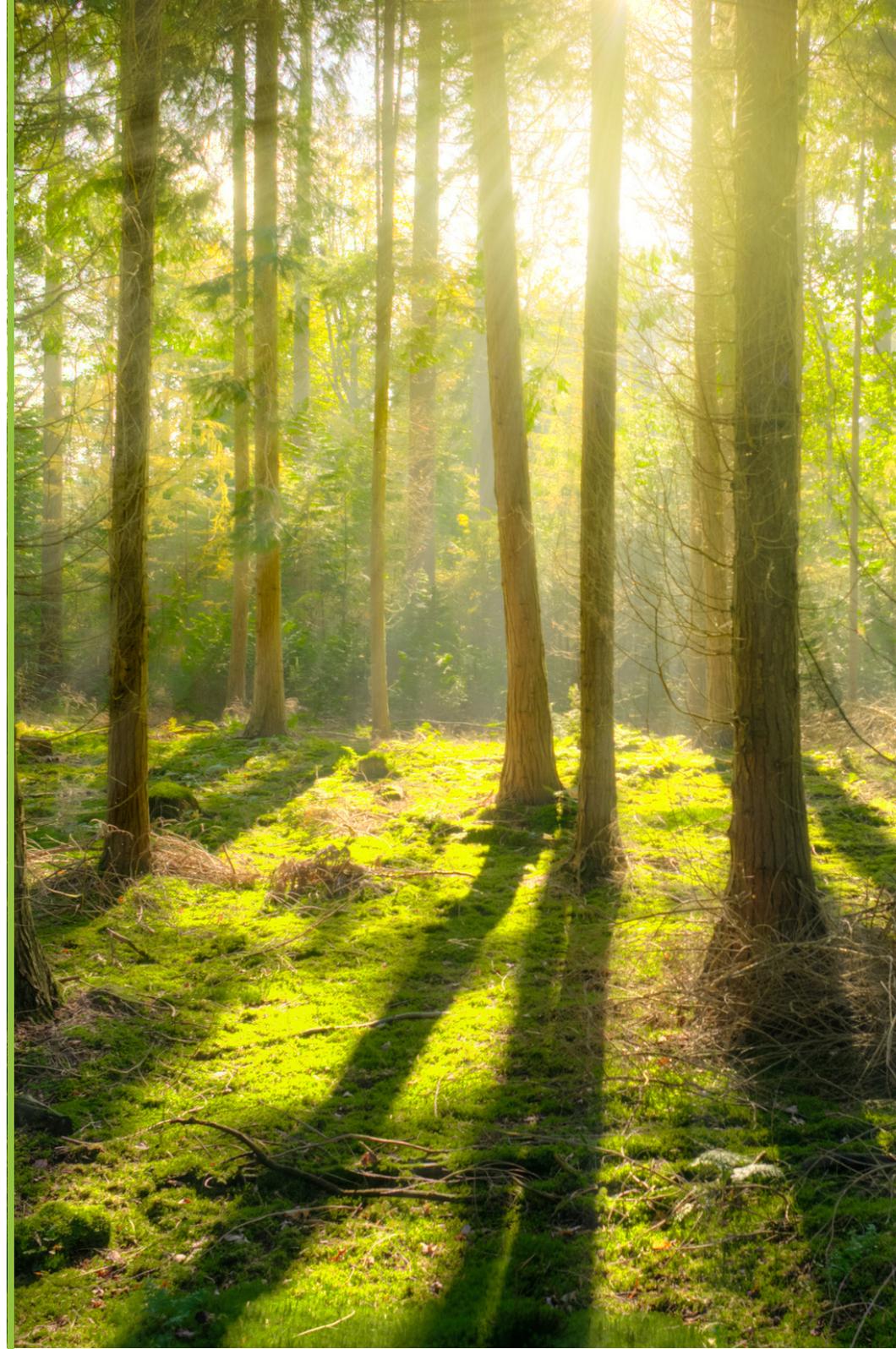
Challenge

Swim England sought award-winning analysis and systems agency, Wood for Trees, for help to gain insight into their membership base and email engagement.

There were assumptions among stakeholders within the organisation that members weren't getting the best email journey but there wasn't a particular system in place to measure this. Email content planning tended to be based on the whole (or large segments within the whole) audience, rather than the different audience types.

Data analysis and reporting on email performance had been focused on top line information but didn't get into the granular level to match audiences with relevant content.

With members being enrolled when joining their local swimming, diving, water polo or artistic swimming clubs, many are unaware they're members and of what benefits are on offer. So, increasing brand awareness is a key objective in approaching email marketing and ensuring members gain the most value from Swim England's membership programme.





Solution

A Wood for Trees foundation audit is the first step to identify successes and challenges from an organisation's existing data – setting the scene and confirming assumptions to move forwards and make more informed decisions.

The starting point with Swim England was to begin quantifying all existing data and picking out top line trends to inform who their members are, how many there are and what they do, with a focus on email engagement.

The process began by interviewing stakeholders within the organisation to learn how data was being used, identify concerns and understand key objectives and outcomes anticipated by completing the foundation audit.

Audiences within the entire membership base were then categorised, along with types of emails sent, so comparisons and correlations could be determined between the datasets. From this, Wood for Trees analysts could break down member data to indicate particular demographics, such as age and gender, and also provide an understanding of member tenure.

Results

Membership base

For context, 5,763,997 emails have been sent to 242,655 members since 2018. Plus, eight different email campaign categories were established, along with nine membership groups in a total base of 134,000 active members.

The foundation audit confirmed the organisation's assumptions about who were the most engaged members.

The largest proportion of members (64%) are below the age of 18 but there's a significant churn when members reach 18, with many heading off to university.

Due to Covid-19 beginning early 2020, there were a huge number of membership lapses (96,000) and, therefore, a shift in attrition rate in 2021 because all swimming pools were closed during the pandemic. However, generally, there's a steady rate of 20-30% lapsing memberships each year.



Results cont'd...

Email engagement

Prior to the foundation audit, the general consensus between stakeholders was that swimmers, making up the majority of the membership base, engaged with emails more so than the other sports governed by Swim England – artistic swimming, water polo and diving, and that the latter didn't engage with emails much at all.

This turned out not to be the case (see below). Divers and water polo players are actually highly engaged with emails they receive with an open rate of 56%. By comparison, swimmers have an open rate of approx. 50%. However, the click to open rate within the smaller groups is lower than general swimmers, suggesting newsletter content should be altered to cater to different audiences.

Although the pandemic was a challenging time for the organisation, particularly for renewing memberships, there was still good ongoing email engagement with an impressive 44% open rate, which increased (along with email volume) as swimming pools began to reopen during 2021.

Discipline	Members Emailed	Sent count	Opened emails	Open Rate	Total Opens	Opens per Opened email	Clicked emails	Click to Open rate	Total clicks	Clicks per Clicked email	Unsubscribed	Unsubscribe Rate
Diving, Water Polo, Swimming	11	525	293	55.8%	680	2.32	22	7.5%	74	3.36	0	0.00%
Diving	1,542	45,620	23,167	50.8%	56,693	2.45	3,119	13.5%	40,112	12.86	55	0.12%
Swimming & Blanks	125,559	3,932,457	1,961,460	49.9%	4,681,905	2.39	200,559	10.2%	344,060	1.72	3,158	0.08%
Artistic, Swimming	256	9,857	4,833	49.0%	12,617	2.61	701	14.5%	1,351	1.93	8	0.08%
Others	39	1,772	868	49.0%	2,130	2.45	78	9.0%	150	1.92	1	0.06%
Artistic	1,854	58,187	28,460	48.9%	68,506	2.41	3,046	10.7%	5,114	1.68	47	0.08%
Diving, Swimming	210	8,509	4,134	48.6%	9,312	2.25	425	10.3%	730	1.72	7	0.08%
Water Polo	3,943	113,086	51,709	45.7%	115,374	2.23	4,381	8.5%	8,278	1.89	183	0.16%
Water Polo, Swimming	1,239	49,168	22,088	44.9%	52,334	2.37	1,940	8.8%	2,983	1.54	56	0.11%
Total	134,653	4,219,181	2,097,012	49.7%	4,999,551	2.38	214,271	10.2%	402,852	1.88	3,515	0.08%



Results cont'd...

Email content related to events has been the most successful, with a phenomenal 74% open rate (see below). The monthly newsletter has the second lowest open rate at 46% but this is sent to the entire database and this percentage is still particularly high.

Every new member receives a welcome email and out of all emails sent, 27,600 (75%) were opened and 8,200 weren't. It was found that those who opened their welcome emails were twice as likely to continue engaging with emails than those who didn't. This indicates welcome emails are pivotal to ongoing member engagement and delivering a good first impression via email is key.

It was also noted during 2019 click to open rate was considerably down compared to years that followed but only birthday emails were sent out during this time, with minimal clickable content.

Category	Members Emailed	Sent count	Open Rate	Click to Open rate	Unsubscribe Rate
Events	23,916	99,554	73.8%	46.4%	0.04%
Member automated	133,529	820,094	58.3%	7.0%	0.11%
Club News	4,772	64,811	56.0%	11.6%	0.06%
Club solus	83,114	175,748	53.0%	8.3%	0.07%
Marketing message	68,760	143,113	48.3%	8.9%	0.07%
Member solus broadcast	111,169	474,461	47.0%	3.9%	0.07%
Member newsletter	127,108	2,091,044	46.1%	9.6%	0.08%
Member solus fun	99,392	350,356	45.5%	17.3%	0.09%
Total	134,653	4,219,181	49.7%	10.2%	0.08%



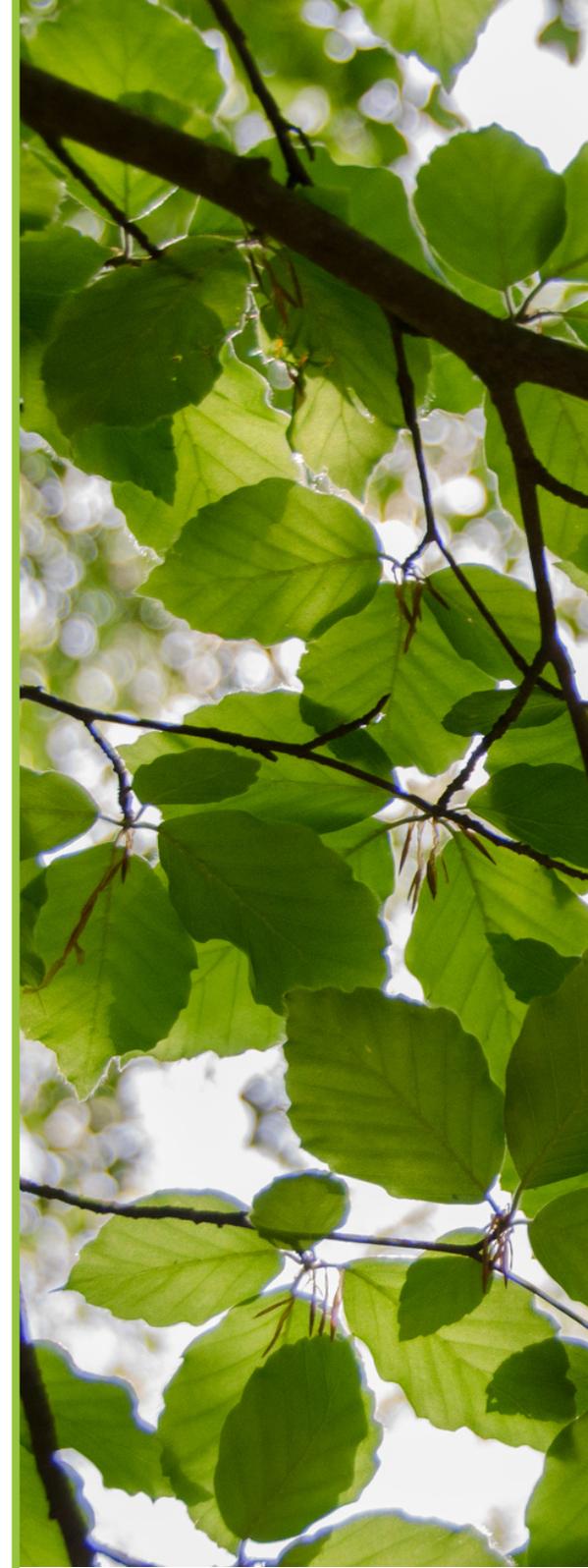
Results cont'd...

Overall, Swim England has high email engagement across all email content categories and member cohorts, and welcome emails have a significant impact on ongoing engagement with email journeys.

The organisation is heavily dependent on good data being received from individual clubs, which is also required to ensure welcome emails are received by the member. Also, non-swimming members thought not to be actively engaged are actually highly engaged with emails they receive.

Swim England is becoming more proactive about harnessing their data and ensuring more relevant content is being sent to the right people. A more dynamic approach is needed moving forwards, with specific content sent to segmented groups.

A deep dive into CRM data is recommended to further discover exactly who their members are, particularly engagement by club role, through raw analysis and more sophisticated categorisation, to deliver a deeper understanding of core audiences and what content most resonates.



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