

IFA Email Usage 2007

stoneshot

www.stoneshot.com

About StoneShot

StoneShot is a leading B2B email marketing agency. We provide online software to create, send and track email communications along with the services you'd expect from a traditional marketing agency such as creative, production, strategy and data management. We work exclusively with investment management and high-tech organisations giving us the necessary depth of knowledge to provide a premium service.

Our current investment management client base includes Allianz, AXA, Cazenove, Close Investments, Cofunds, Gartmore, Invesco, Sarasin, Sesame, Skandia and SVM. We operate globally through offices in London, Paris, Munich, New York and Hong Kong.

The 2007 IFA survey

Last year we surveyed 100 IFAs to find out how they respond to the marketing emails they receive from fund managers. It was the first survey of its kind and our aim was to better understand IFA email usage in order to drive more effective email marketing programmes for our clients.

A lot can happen in a year. This time last year, most people thought a Blackberry was something you put in your pie and ionic wind engines were... er, ionic wind engines. So we decided to update our research, but this time around we contacted the top 100 UK investment managers to get them involved. Marketing managers from 17 organisations actively contributed (thank you!) and a larger group cast their eye over our questionnaire and gave a nod of approval.

Naturally, we did the survey by email using SmartForm technology (more about that later). So, how and where do IFAs access their email? How often? How many fund managers do they get email from? And do they embrace new technology or wrinkle their nose at it?

89% check their email every hour (82% last year)

82% prefer fund updates and launches and industry news by email

70% check email at home and office (54% last year)

51% increase in use of online email (just 6% previously)

My endless love

First off, IFAs still love email.

A whopping 89% of IFAs check their email at least every hour. Online email from the likes of Hotmail, Google, AOL and Yahoo has risen like the price tag on a Kensington mews house with almost ten times the number of IFAs checking their email online this year. Three IFAs even admitted to checking their email in the bath. If that's not love, what is?

Naturally, content is still king. Hard industry news, fund updates and launches are the order of the day and 73% cite "irrelevant content" as the main reason why they would hit the Unsubscribe button.

IFAs have become more sophisticated email users too. It's no longer enough to send a monthly email to everyone. Half prefer HTML; half prefer text emails. Half are happy for weekly email; the rest, monthly.

The Blackberry way

The hottest news in our survey is around mobility.

IFAs not only know that a Blackberry is a piece of mobile technology – rather than a squishy fruit that stains their favourite Genesis t-shirt – but 23% actually use them. Just 6% checked their email on the road last year.

More than nine out of ten are still using MS Outlook, although 56% have tried other online email accounts, like Hotmail and Google. That stat's up a massive 51% on last year. So there's a solid trend toward mobile email supported by an increase in online accounts and home working.

While we're on the subject, we should point out that using web-based email brings with it another challenge. It's no longer good enough to just check your email in Lotus Notes thinking that if it looks good there, it will be good everywhere. The latest versions of Hotmail and Google render email pretty badly (image blocking is the least of your worries). It's therefore even more important to check your email on a multitude of email clients. It's why we offer email testing as a core service to all our clients.

The power of choice

Remember those coffee ads in the 80s? Way back then a coffee was a spoonful of freeze-dried granules in a cup of hot water. Served up by Gareth Hunt of course.

Today we are more sophisticated. Asking for a coffee now is like ordering breakfast in New York, and if you don't know a tall skinny latte from a double decaf mocha macchiato you're in big trouble.

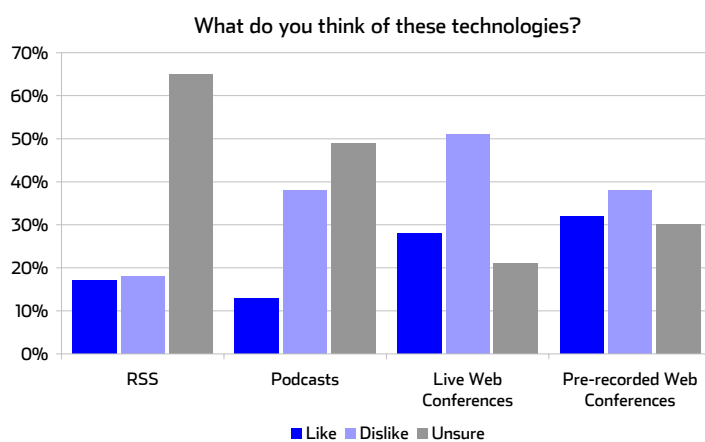
The same has happened to email. It seems the more IFAs love email, the more they want it their way. There's an even split between those that want weekly and monthly communications and very similar mix again between those that like HTML emails and plain text. So, unilaterally deciding that IFAs will get monthly email with images isn't going to cut the mustard. If you ask your IFAs what they want and deliver it, you'll earn their undying loyalty and respect.

We have of course developed technology to make this process a cinch. We use an integrated form to capture IFA preferences and update segmentation. This information is then used to drive targeted communications. This might all sound complex, but it's a breeze to set up and most importantly it's self-managing.

The worldwide what?

While IFAs have embraced mobile technology, they've given other technologies the cold shoulder.

There's a real lack of awareness over what RSS and Podcasts are and how they can add value. Most know what live web conferences are and dislike them. That said, there's still enough interest to justify running conferences with around a third giving them the thumbs up. This ties in again with the third that prefer video for fund updates.



We expect these technologies to gain popularity in the same way that mobile email has over the last year.

Fund updates and interviews

We asked some very specific questions about fund updates as these communications are often the cornerstone of a typical fund manager's email programme.

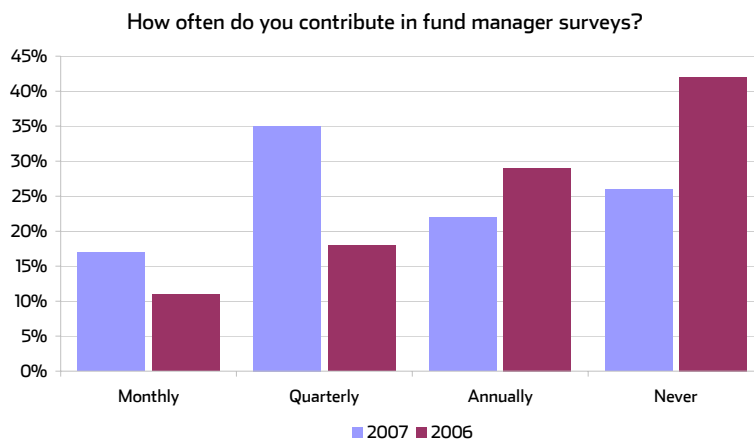
There's been no change in the number of IFAs that like to be kept informed on fund updates and industry news via email (82%) and conference calls (9%). There has however been a dip in those that like to attend regional events, which is down 22% to 44% this year. It could be that IFAs are getting the information they need via email or that they simply have less time now. The increase in mobile email does point towards them being out visiting clients more often.

Fewer IFAs want emails with links to online content (down 23% on last year), preferring to click through to a PDF instead (44%) or have all content in the email (22%). This is most likely because a PDF maintains its layout better when printed or distributed.

On fund manager interviews, 10% prefer to watch a live interview with about a third tuning in later to watch a recording. There's been a 9% drop in those that sit in on a conference call down to 14% and a similar increase on IFAs that prefer to read a transcript. Both stats strongly show that IFAs prefer post-event communications.

Surveys

Interesting, this one. Last time, surveys met with the kind of resistance normally associated with cats and soapy baths. A year on, IFAs are saying that surveys are OK as long as they're not too frequent.



Traditionally fund managers run a huge annual survey to ensure they are offering IFAs the right products and services. We've noticed a shift in thinking from "project" to "programme" and have used our technology to introduce Customer Lifecycle Management programmes for our clients. Please let us know if you'd like to hear more.

The raw data

If you prefer looking at the raw data rather than reading, who are we to deny you? So here goes...

How do you access your email?

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Outlook ¹	85%	3%	3%	3%
Lotus Notes	4%	0%	0%	39%
AOL	4%	2%	0%	39%
Google	5%	2%	4%	34%
Hotmail	7%	8%	3%	34%
Yahoo	4%	4%	2%	36%
Other	6%	2%	3%	32%

Where do you access your email?

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
In the office ²	97%	1%	2%	0%
At home	42%	24%	3%	9%
Smartphone/Blackberry	9%	7%	7%	29%
In the bath	1%	0%	2%	43%

How often do you check it?

	2007	2006
When it arrives	52%	54%
Hourly	37%	28%
Daily	9%	18%
When I can remember	2%	

¹ 93% of those surveyed in 2006 used Outlook Often, Sometimes or Rarely. 1% used Lotus Notes and 2% used Hotmail

² 91% accessed their email in the office in 2006. 54% accessed it at home and 6% used a mobile device.

How many fund managers do you receive email from?

1 to 4	20%	5 to 8	6%
9 to 10	13%	10 or more	61%

How often do fund managers email you?

	Now	Would prefer
Hourly	0%	0%
Daily	16%	10%
Weekly	54%	42%
Monthly	25%	37%
Infrequently	5%	11%

What would cause you to unsubscribe from an email?

Email does not display properly	8%	Incorrect personalisation	2%
Irrelevant content	73%	Too frequent emails	17%

Are you more likely to read emails that have images in them?

No - I prefer text emails	38%	No - images are blocked in my email software	19%
Yes - I prefer emails with images	43%		

How do you like your fund update emails?

	2007	2006
All content in the email	22%	13%
Short email with a link to a PDF	44%	30%
Short email with links to online content	34%	57%

What do you think of these other communication media?

	Like	Dislike	Unsure
RSS	17%	18%	65%
Podcasts	13%	38%	49%
Live web conferences	28%	51%	21%
Pre-recorded web conferences	32%	38%	30%

On fund manager interviews, do you prefer to:

	2007	2006
Attend an online seminar	10%	9%
Read the transcript	46%	35%
Sit in on a conference call	14%	23%
Watch a filmed interview	30%	33%

Do you download podcasts of fund manager seminars? How about viewing fund manager videos?

	Podcasts	Videos
Always	0%	1%
Often	15%	36%
Never	78%	62%
What are they?	7%	1%

How do you like to be kept informed on fund updates/launches and industry issues?

	2007	2006
Email communication	82%	82%
Sit in on a conference call	9%	9%
Attend a regional event	44%	66%

How often do you contribute in fund manager surveys?

	2007	2006
Monthly	17%	11%
Quarterly	35%	18%
Annually	22%	29%
Never	26%	42%

In conclusion

Email is firmly established as the preferred medium to communicate with IFAs. They love it.

But they are now much more selective about what they'd like to see in their Inbox. A generic weekly or monthly email is no longer enough, and gone too are the days of sending conference call invites to everyone as they don't all like them. The question now is not what IFAs want via email, but how you deliver it.

The demand for a specialist email agency has never been greater. And who better to choose than a company that not only understands your business but is the industry leader. (That's us if you weren't sure).

We'd love to take you through this research and demonstrate how we can improve your email programme. So what's stopping you? Why not get in touch by calling Gavin John or Matt Burley on 020 7628 4444 or drop us an email at engage@stoneshot.com.

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