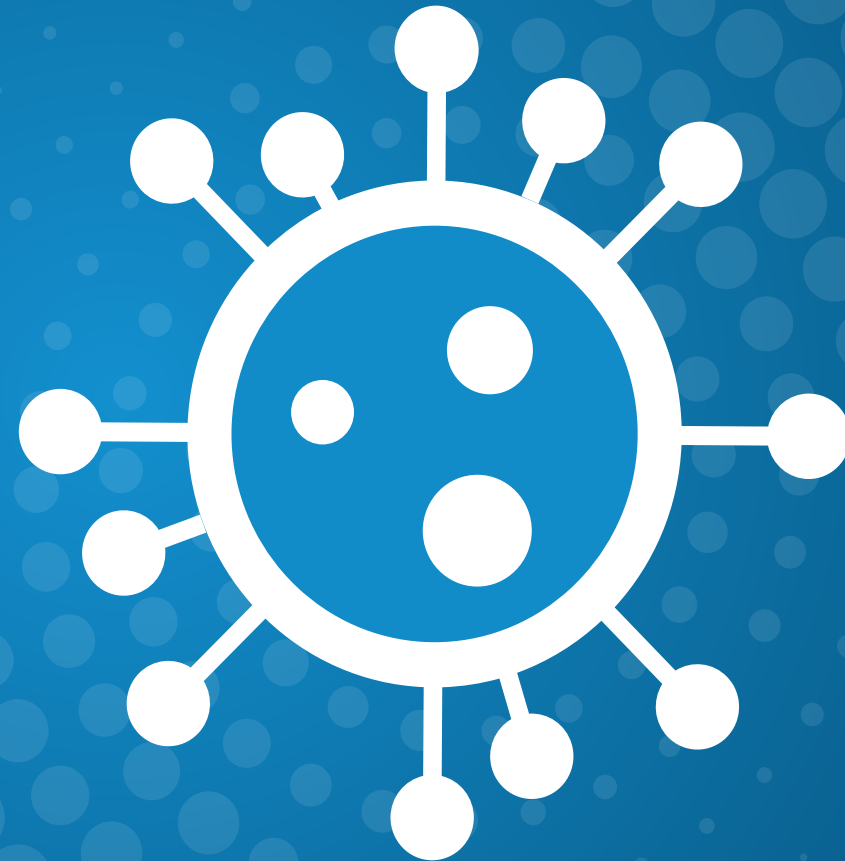
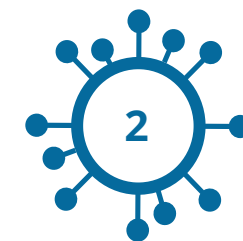


COVID-19 IMPACT REPORT

For the Financial Services Industry
June 2020



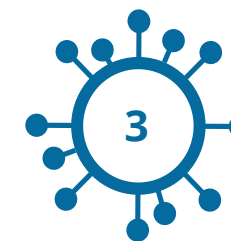


ABOUT THIS REPORT

The financial marketing landscape has drastically changed in 2020. StoneShot's Report: The Impact of COVID-19 shares insights and data gathered from the marketing automation platform as well as qualitative insights from our global portfolio of clients during the pandemic. After doing extensive research and speaking with several clients to see how COVID-19 has changed their marketing outlook, we assembled a report to help financial marketers navigate this situation.

Our report is divided into key insights, email statistics, monthly and regional breakdown, impact on events, crisis communications and practical tips to take away. The goal is to help marketers weather through the current crisis armed with topical information.





A WORD FROM OUR CEO



The COVID-19 pandemic has left a marked impact on our professions, ways of living, and habits.

As an agency specializing in the financial services sector, we observed that our clients have had to rapidly focus on digital methods of delivery to keep operating, and we suspect this will continue well beyond the COVID-19 crisis. Our latest report was specially written for wealth managers, asset managers and private banks to reflect on key insights and tips on how to handle this unique global situation. In tough times, we believe it's more important for financial marketers to invest in communications and understanding their customers to build the trust needed to get through this together.

GAVIN JOHN, CEO, StoneShot





CONTENTS

- 1** Insights from our Clients
- 2** Email Marketing Statistics during the Pandemic
- 3** Spotlight on Countries
- 4** Event Marketing Statistics during the Pandemic
- 5** Psychology of Crisis Communications
- 6** Tips for Financial Services Marketers



1
**INSIGHTS
FROM
OUR
CLIENTS**





We gathered insights from conversations conducted in April 2020 with our clients in top banks and asset management firms. They shared views on how they adapted to the situation and how they envision further change.

Timeliness is a trend

Press the fast forward button! Addressing the questions and concerns of key stakeholders has taken priority with the pandemic. Reacting to news and market conditions by disseminating information via email or webinars has been crucial to address risks and opportunities appropriately. One customer increased communications from once a quarter/month to twice per week and digital marketing has been augmented personalized communications. Thanks to this effort, one client was able to win additional customers as this strengthened trust in their brand.

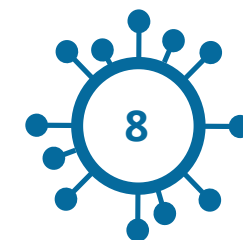
Webinar use increased

Sometimes, writing content is not quick enough because market reaction follows swiftly from a news update. Holding live webinars helps address urgent pieces of market information to reassure their clients. A recording is then sent out the next day to the ones who could not make it.

COVID-19 materials were centralized

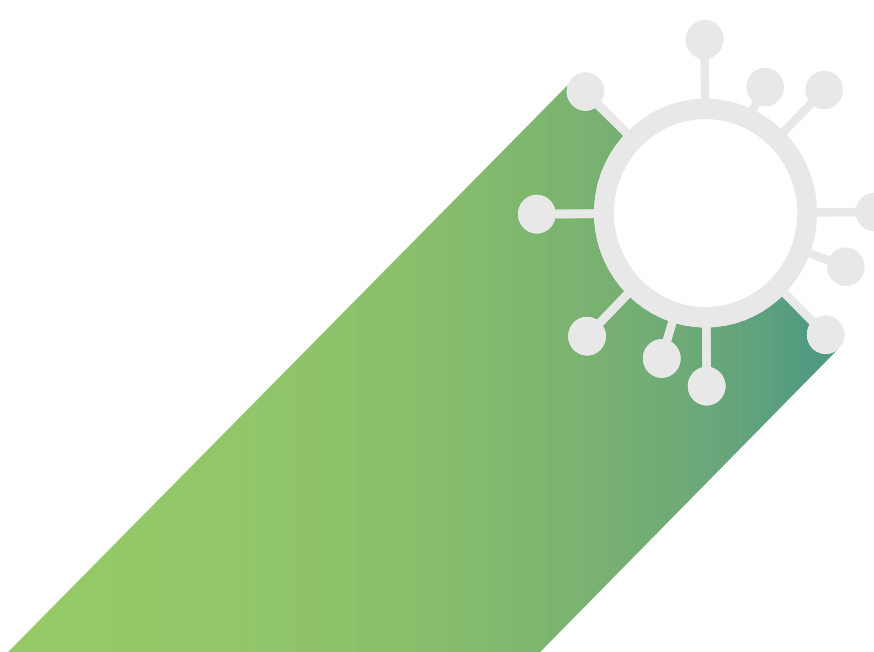
COVID-19 is seemingly treated as one long extended campaign where the internal team are communicating more frequently. Many clients are creating dedicated newsletters and content hubs to help their stakeholders and internal teams find relevant updates and information.





There will be longer term digital transformation

The longer COVID-19 hangs around, the more campaigns are taking a digital focus. New internal processes are being put in place to become the new norm. Some of the digital client communications that they have been planning for some time has been accelerated by the crisis e.g. agile marketing will be here to stay.



Events were postponed to Q4

With the uncertain duration of COVID-19, many clients have tentatively postponed their events to start in Q3 or Q4. To fill the gaps in the meantime, they are looking into virtual events (both third party and proprietary) and replacing in person activities with webcasts, webinars, more calls, emails, and social media.

Other campaigns are put on hold

As most marketing resources are being channelled into dealing with the current situation, other campaigns are being put on hold. Marketing has become a lot more tactical and the teams across all clients are busier than ever. When there is market volatility, clients need assurance and value timeliness, so things move very fast.





Wellness is being incorporated

Encouraged by great open rates for internal communication (73% on average in March 2020) our clients are planning long term changes to their communication to keep employees engaged. Different factors related to COVID-19 including tips around wellness, mental health, the ability to do remote work and developing new skills are being talked about. Before COVID-19, people were not treating wellness and mental health as a priority. However, with prolonged isolation being a factor that could potentially induce loneliness and depression, many are sharing well-being tips on how to be efficient and productive during the lockdown.

There was positive feedback from clients and internal teams

The reactivity that propelled marketing teams to increase communications has prompted an increase in open rates and positive feedback from clients. Customer experience is a focus point which is normally important for keeping loyalty but can also help win new business.



2 EMAIL MARKETING STATISTICS DURING THE PANDEMIC



HOW WE CREATED THIS REPORT

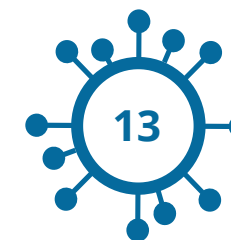
Email statistics are pulled from our proprietary StoneShot marketing automation platform where client reporting and usage data is anonymized. We have looked at the numbers and pulled out interesting trends from January to May 2020 to see the impact of COVID-19 on email marketing and communications. StoneShot app data also highlights audience behavior and communication about Coronavirus during these critical times.

The first section outlines general trends and figures divided into two periods: the COVID-19 Onset in January-March and COVID-19 New Normal in April and May. In the first one, our clients were reacting to the new situation, in the second, the lockdown impact of COVID-19 became seemingly the new normal after having persisted for more than a month in most countries. The following sections in this report will break it down further by month and by geographical distribution.

Broadly speaking, we saw increased communication, COVID-19 specific campaigns, stable open rates, less opt-outs, and consistent engagement across all our global data.



**COVID-19
ONSET**



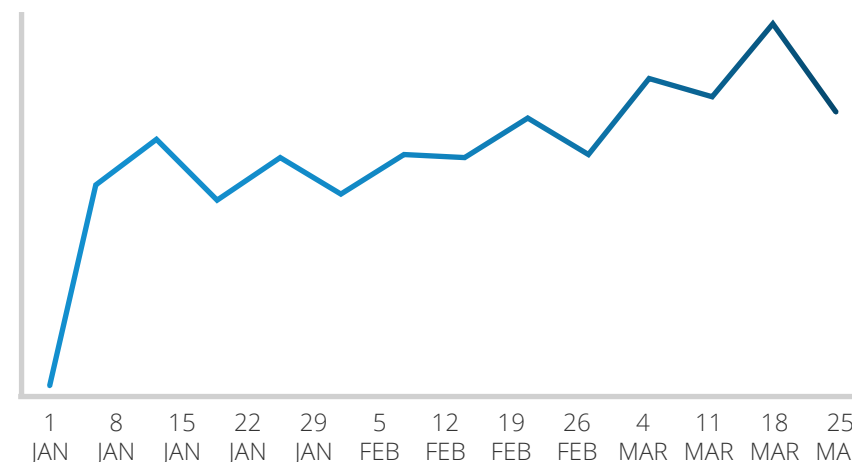
COVID-19 ONSET

(January - March 2020)

There was an increase in email send volume

Due to fast changing market activity and frequent important announcements that drive it, we have seen a 40% increase in emails sent in March compared with the start of 2020. In addition, announcements of stricter rules and multi-country lockdowns begot a 48% increase in emails sent between the week of March 9 and March 16.

CAMPAIGNS PER WEEK IN JANUARY - MARCH



INCREASED COMMUNICATION IN MARCH

40%

Increase in emails sent

48%

Increase in number of emails sent between week 11 (March 9) and week 12 (March 16)

65%

Increase in number of contacts used



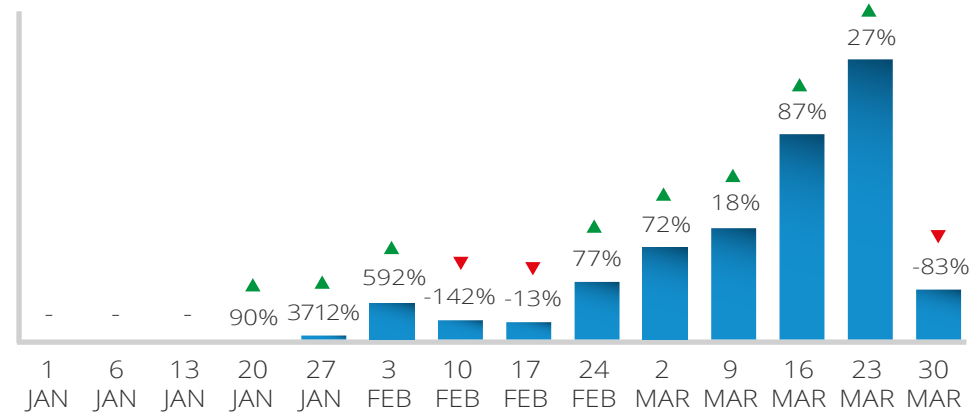
COVID-19 ONSET

(January - March 2020)

We have observed a 2,320% increase in the number of subject lines related to COVID-19 or Coronavirus in March compared with January 2020. Topics progressed from reassuring the clients on business continuity with working from home to focusing on content around the markets, asset classes, products, and fund updates.

16% of campaigns included COVID-19, Coronavirus or virus in the subject line. Of these, 45% used COVID-19 while 37% used Coronavirus. This has seen a steady increase of 86% week on week since week 3 (January 13) when it all started.

% INCREASE AND DECREASE IN NUMBER OF CONTACTS



COVID-19 CAMPAIGNS

2,230%

The increase in the number of subject lines related to COVID-19 or Coronavirus

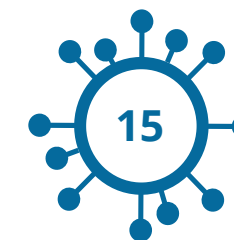
8%

Number of campaigns with COVID-19 or Coronavirus in the subject line (does not include all emails with COVID-19 in the body)

86%

Steady increase on average week on week since January



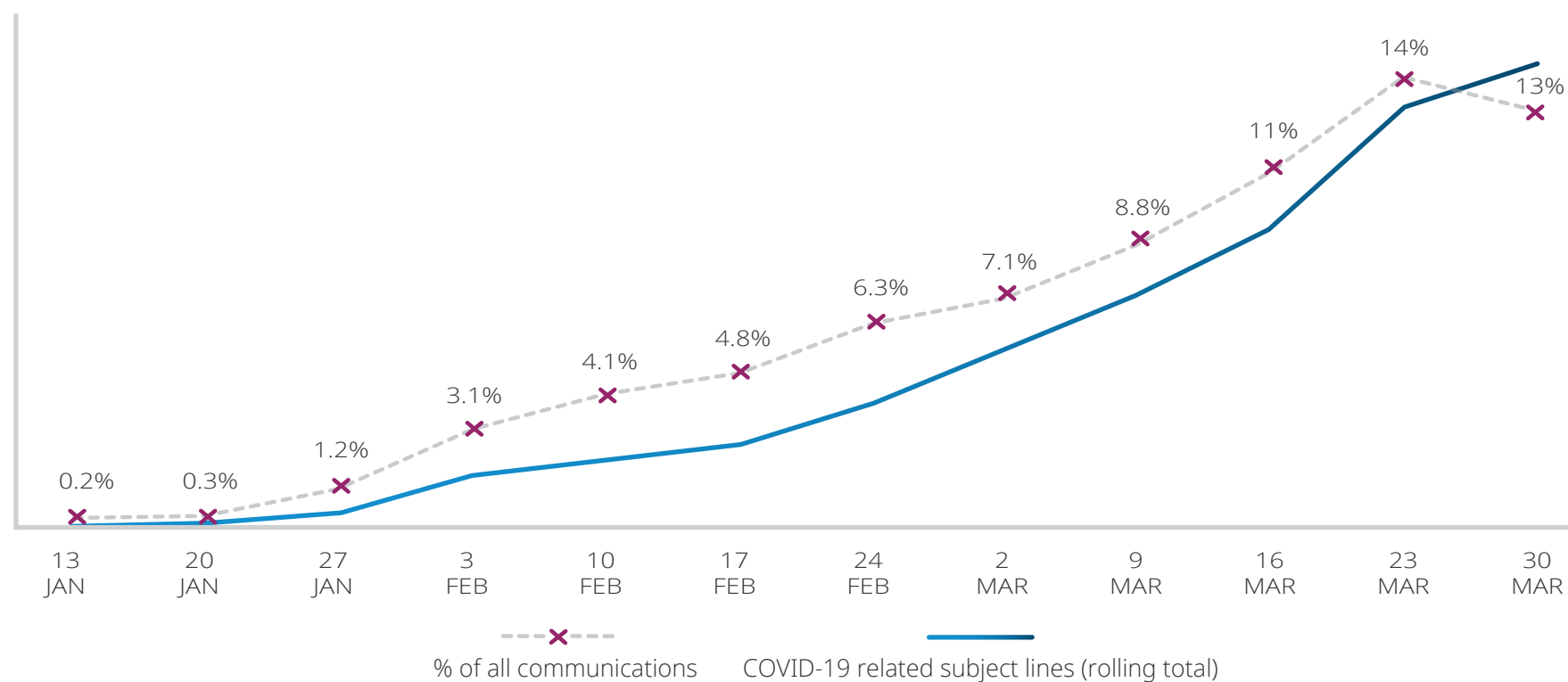


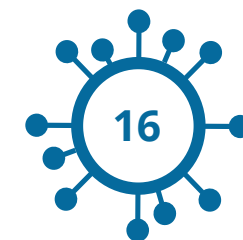
COVID-19 ONSET

(January - March 2020)

COVID-19 CAMPAIGNS

January to March saw a steady increase in COVID-19 communications both overall and as a percentage of all emails





COVID-19 ONSET

(January - March 2020)

Slightly lengthier text and lower average click rates for COVID-19 communication

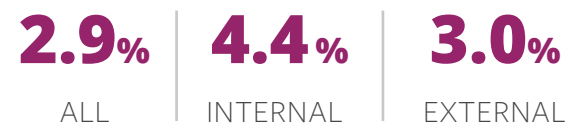
When comparing COVID-19 campaigns, which have seen a 14% increase of emails with COVID-19 or Coronavirus in the subject line from February to March to other campaigns, there was a slight increase in the average amount of words

and sections used. In terms of sections, an average email communication is built around 10 sections, while the COVID-19 emails tended to have 12 sections on average. This implies that the COVID-19 campaigns were trying to be self-contained with the bulk of the text in the body of the email. Perhaps, this is also why COVID-19 emails saw less click through rates.

AVERAGE CLICKS FOR REGULAR EMAILS



AVERAGE CLICKS FOR COVID-19 EMAILS





COVID-19 ONSET

(January - March 2020)

Certain types of content perform better

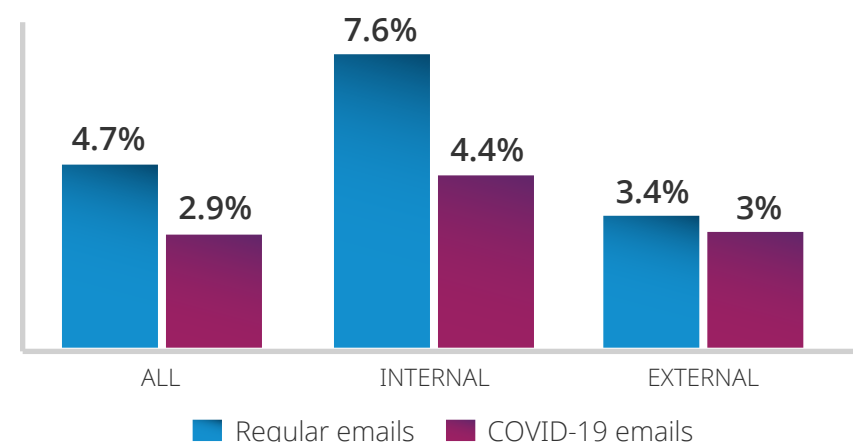
Since the beginning of the year, the best performing types of content in terms of open rates across all our clients were Market Commentaries (30% on average, 23% of which with COVID-19 in the subject line), Product Updates (27% on average, none with COVID-19 in the subject line) as well as News and Newsletters (50% and 47% open rates).

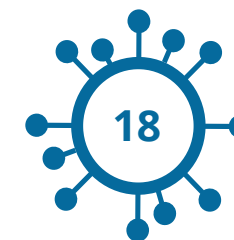
OPEN RATES PER TYPE OF CONTENT

TYPE OF CONTENT	AVERAGE	COVID-19 SUBJECT LINE
MARKET COMMENTARIES	30%	23%
PRODUCT UPDATES	27%	N/A
NEWS & NEWSLETTERS	50%	47%

CLICK RATES

Longer, self-contained COVID-19 emails saw lower average click rates





COVID-19 ONSET

(January - March 2020)

There was client interest

The increased frequency and lengthier text did not put off clients as open rates remained stable averaging at 43.2% with variances of 15-23% weekly due to important announcements being made or updates to the contact list. The decreasing number of opt-outs (0.035% in March vs. 0.077% in January) compared to a 0-0.05% overall average also indicates topicality.

STABLE OPEN RATES

42%

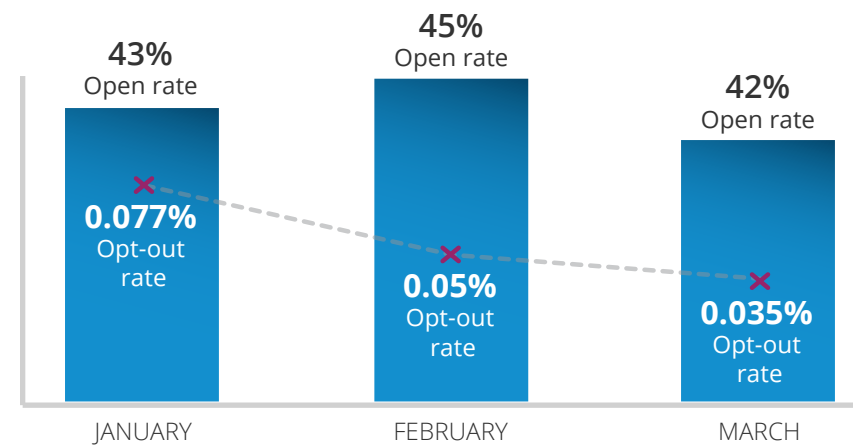
Average open rate in January - March

15%-23%

The variation between open rates on a weekly basis

OPEN/OPT-OUT RATES

Open rates remained stable while opt-out rates fell for all communications from January to March





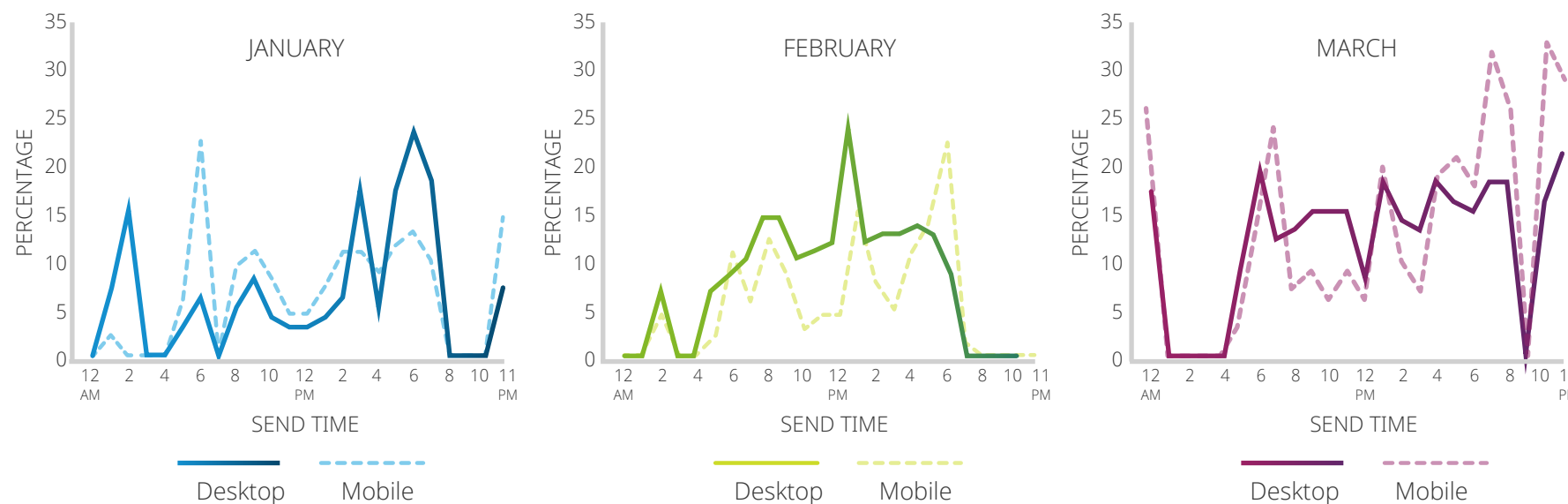
COVID-19 ONSET (January - March 2020)

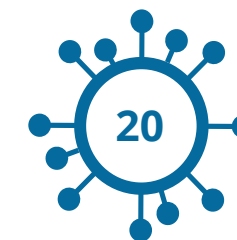
There were longer core open rate hours

We have seen a lot more open rates in this period after the core working hours of 9am-5pm. In January, we have seen an average of 15% open rate only during the hours of 6am-7pm and before 11pm with a small percentage of mobile checks at 1-2am. However,

by March the hours extended to 6am-8pm and 10pm-midnight with no one checking in the wee hours of 1-2am. For mobile users, the highest number of clicks can be seen between 6-8am, during lunch break as well as between 5-7pm. It proves that people stay connected but switch between desktop and mobile.

OPEN RATES BY PERCENTAGE FOR EMAILS BASED ON SEND TIME





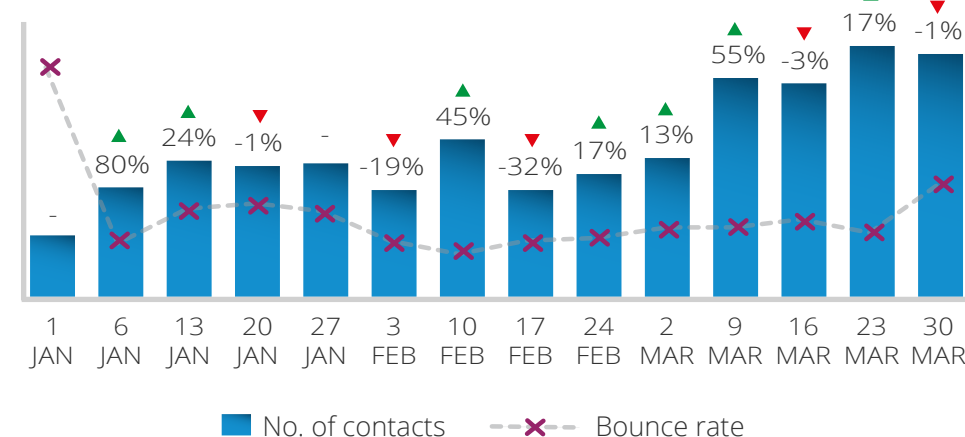
COVID-19 ONSET

(January - March 2020)

The contact lists were extended

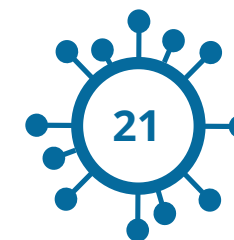
The far-reaching effects of COVID-19 meant that people contacted a larger portion of their contact list with over 65% increase in contacts used. This was reflected by the 0.48% increase in bounces averaging 2.9% to 3.4% at the highest point.

INCREASING LIST SIZES ARE MET WITH A SLIGHT UPTURN IN BOUNCE RATES



0.48%
Increase in bounces from average 2.9% to 3.4% at the highest point





COVID-19 ONSET

(January - March 2020)

There was increased internal interest

Perhaps the remote working environment made us eager to receive communications from colleagues since 16% of overall email marketing campaigns are internal. From the COVID-19 campaigns, 15% of these were internal with an average open rate of 73% (up to over 88%).

However, a clear increase in the number of client communications resulted in a lower percentage of internal vs. external communication since the beginning of the year – 16% overall compared with over 28% in 2019.

INTERNAL VS. EXTERNAL CAMPAIGNS
REMAINED CONSTANT

15%

of campaigns with COVID-19 in the subject line were internal

16%

of overall campaigns were internal

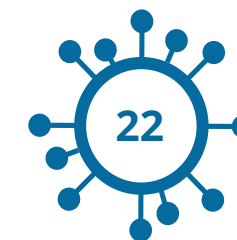
73%

Average open rate for internal COVID-19 campaigns (highest 88% in week 5)

34%

Average open rate for external COVID-19 campaigns (highest 44% in week 11)





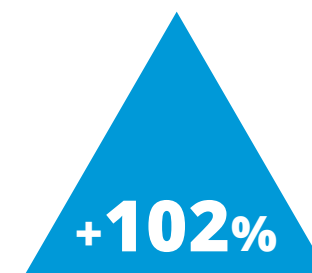
COVID-19 ONSET

(January - March 2020)

COVID-19 emails did not follow bi-weekly cycles

When analyzing all the email campaigns that we manage globally, we noticed a curious trend. The number of emails increases across all our clients in odd weeks (+102% on average) and decreases in even weeks (-66% on average) when compared with a previous week. However, the communications with COVID-19 or Coronavirus in the subject line remain unaffected and increased steadily week after week by 86% on average compared with the previous one.

BI-WEEKLY CYCLES DID NOT AFFECT THE COVID-19 MAILINGS WHICH STEADILY INCREASED IN NUMBER



Traditional increase in number of emails in odd weeks vs. previous week



Traditional decrease in number of emails in even weeks vs. previous week

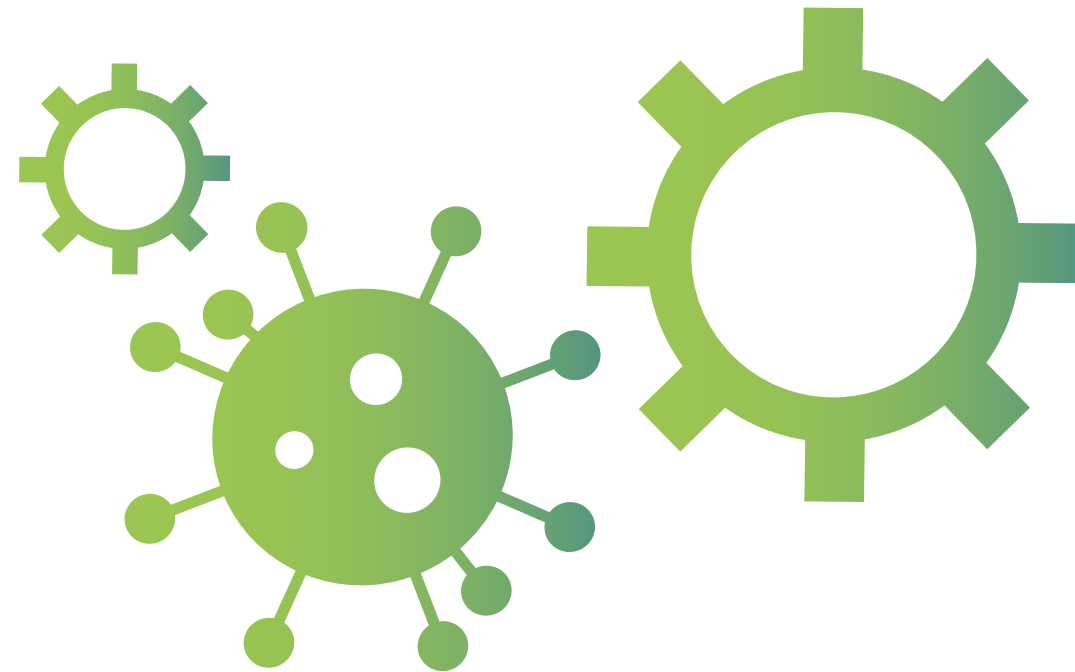


COVID-19
THE NEW NORMAL

COVID-19 THE NEW NORMAL

(April – May 2020)

The lockdown impact of COVID-19 is seemingly the new normal after having persisted for more than a month in most countries. It has also brought about a new culture of mass full-time remote working across the financial services sector. Whilst this sector has offered flexible working or remote working at times to some staff, the scale of this remote working endeavour is a complete novelty to the industry. In a sector that used to place face time at the heart of its operations we dug into our data to find out how remote work is impacting productivity and client communications.





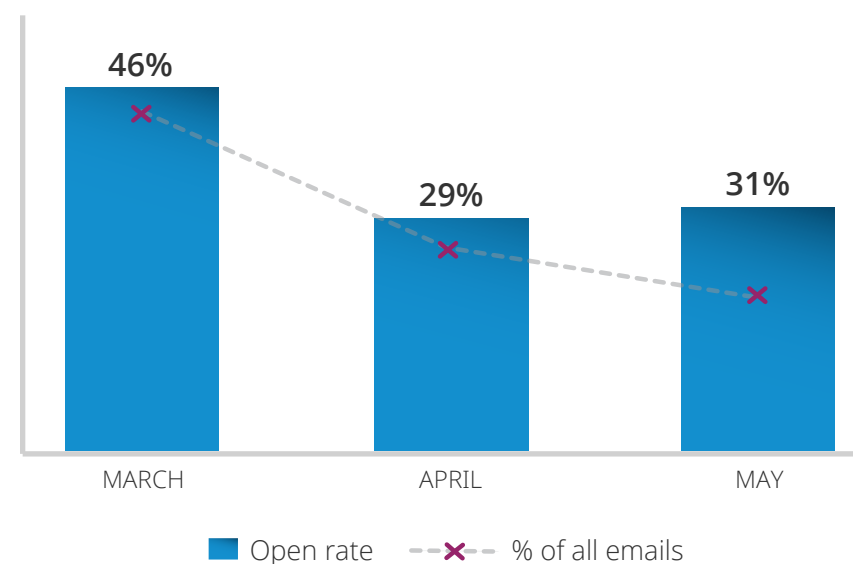
COVID-19 THE NEW NORMAL

(April – May 2020)

Coronavirus mentions are unpopular

Now that coronavirus is (unfortunately) a part of daily life rather than a novelty, we saw 77% decrease in emails (66% for external and 24% for internal) referring directly to Coronavirus or COVID-19 in the subject line in April compared to March. However, it doesn't mean that the communications did not focus or mention this subject, it was just not mentioned in the title. Perhaps people are getting fatigued of the word and need more creative ways of referring to the current situation. In May, COVID-19 campaigns fared worse in terms of open rates compared to all campaigns. There were 30.9% opens for COVID-19 versus 38.4% for all campaigns. The best time to talk about COVID-19 was March with a 45% open rate across the board, and 41.6% in 2020 on average.

OPEN RATES FOR COVID-19-RELATED SUBJECT LINES AND THE RELATIVE NUMBER OF THESE COMMUNICATIONS DROPPED FROM MARCH TO MAY



COVID-19 THE NEW NORMAL

(April – May 2020)

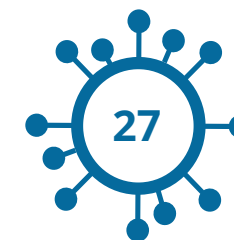
COVID-19 related titles get more creative

In May, the campaigns with COVID-19 or Coronavirus in subject line decreased by 32%. However, other titles were used that still referred to the current situation mostly showing the positive aspects and opportunities despite the challenges.

Example themes

- Distressed Debt: Seeking Opportunity in Uncertain Times
- Beyond the crisis – opportunity for Global Equity investors
- Finding value in a landscape rife with risks
- China growth under challenge
- Active Minds: The EU's trillion-euro green tonic for economic recovery





COVID-19 THE NEW NORMAL

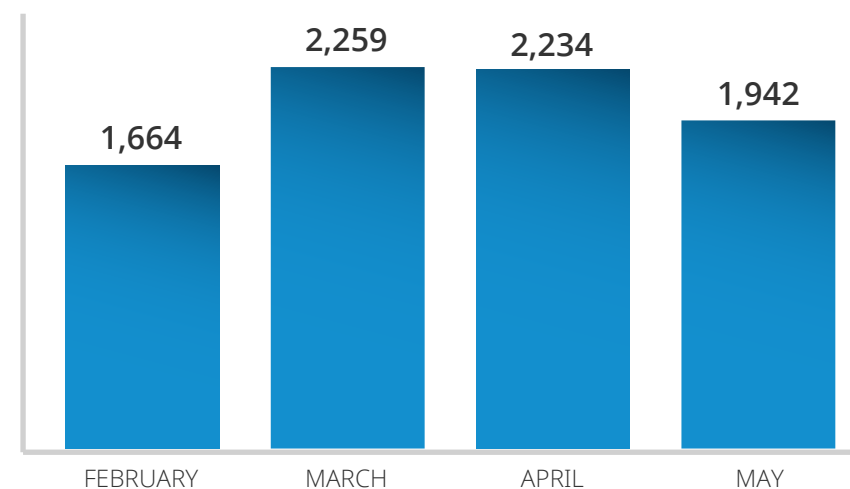
(April – May 2020)

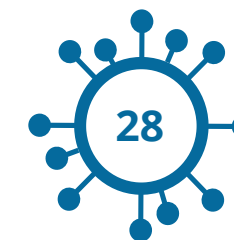
Send volumes are high in April but dipping in May

Email communications increased when COVID-19 came into our lives and it stayed that way for a while. March and April send volumes are roughly the same after increasing by 36% in March when compared to February. The insignificant difference of 1.1% between March and April shows that the new level of frequency is sustained.

However, May campaign volume decreased by 13.1% when compared with April and 14% decrease compared with March. It could be that since there was less market volatility and a negative market outlook in general as markets continued in a downward trajectory, there was less material to communicate.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CAMPAIGNS SENT BEGINS TO NORMALIZE FOLLOWING SPIKE IN MARCH-APRIL



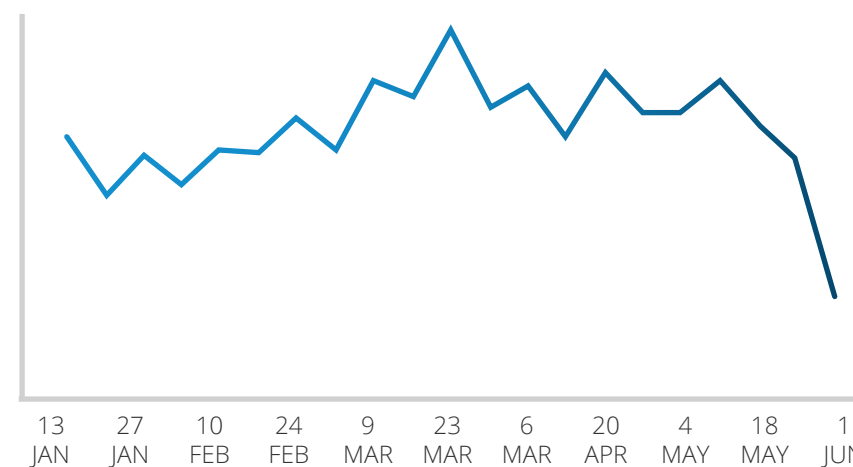


COVID-19 THE NEW NORMAL

Bi-weekly cycles continued until April but stopped in May

The trend of an increase in the number of emails sent in odd weeks and decrease in even weeks was still on until end of April. However, from week 21 we observed a clear decrease in the number of emails sent leading to the biggest dip in the week 23 (-57% compared with the previous week). Again, this could just be linked to the decrease in market volatility and the reluctance to talk about a negative market outlook.

BI-WEEKLY CYCLE OF SENT CAMPAIGNS
ENDS IN WEEK 21 (MAY 18)





COVID-19 THE NEW NORMAL

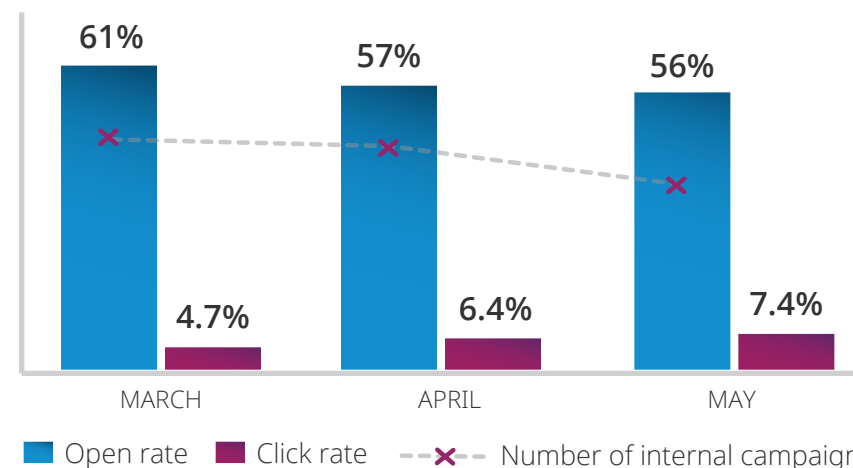
(April – May 2020)

Internal communications have decreased

Internal communications decreased by 4.2% in April when compared to March. Perhaps, the new measures around working remotely and business continuity have been the focus of communications in March for the US and EU, which brought about the spike in activity. The decreased communication seems to signify that workers are settling into their new working pattern.

Internal campaigns comprised 38% of all campaigns in May. There was also a 17% decrease in send volume when compared to April but this was the lowest in the year, even lower than that of January and February. However, the number of people contacted was higher than in April by 15% and only lower than in March when compared with other months.

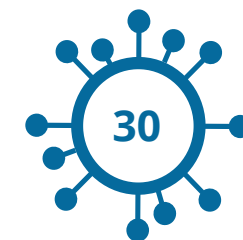
ENGAGEMENT WITH INTERNAL MAILINGS REMAINS HEALTHY FROM MARCH TO APRIL WHILE NUMBER OF CAMPAIGNS DROPS



However, engagement remained high as open rates were a healthy 55.9% (compared with 57.3% in April) and the click rates were 7.4% (compared with 6.4% in April). There were no opt-outs. Even if the communications were for internal teams, the 0.078% bounce back rates in May (and 1.9% in April) were similar to external campaigns.

COVID-19 is still a hot topic internally. Only 5% of internal campaigns have COVID-19 in the subject line but their number increased by 57% compared to April.





COVID-19 THE NEW NORMAL

(April – May 2020)

External emails remain steady but COVID-19 is getting old

External campaigns remained at a similar level in May with the open rate oscillating at 28.2% (compared to 28.8% in April) and click rate at 2.8% (compared to 3.1% in April). There was also a slight increase of 2.9% in the number of contacts used and a 12% decrease in the number of emails sent when compared to April. Although the number of campaigns is higher than in January and February, we can see that the communications are generally in decline.

However, there was an increasing number of opt-outs in external emails at 0.12% in May compared to 0.075% in April and 0.06% in March. Opt-outs were highest in May since the beginning of the year.

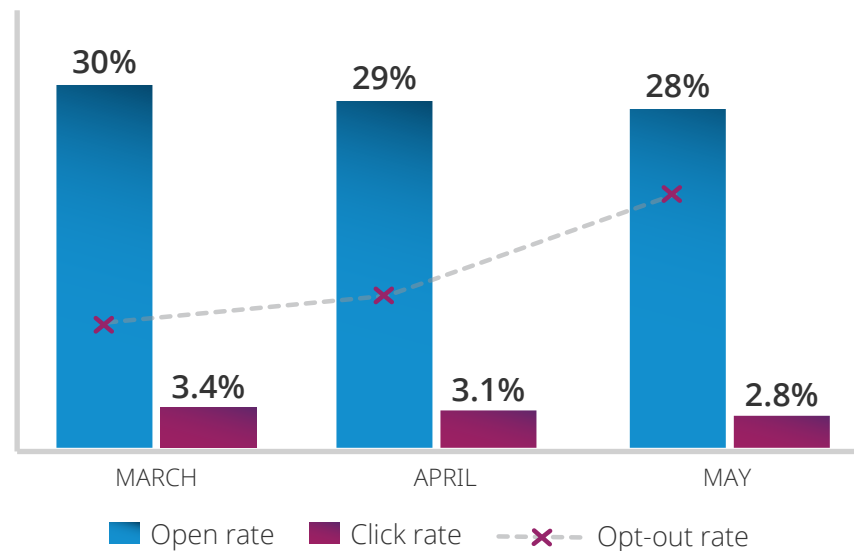
COVID-19 subject lines emails are also decreasing by almost 40% indicating people are getting bored of the subject.



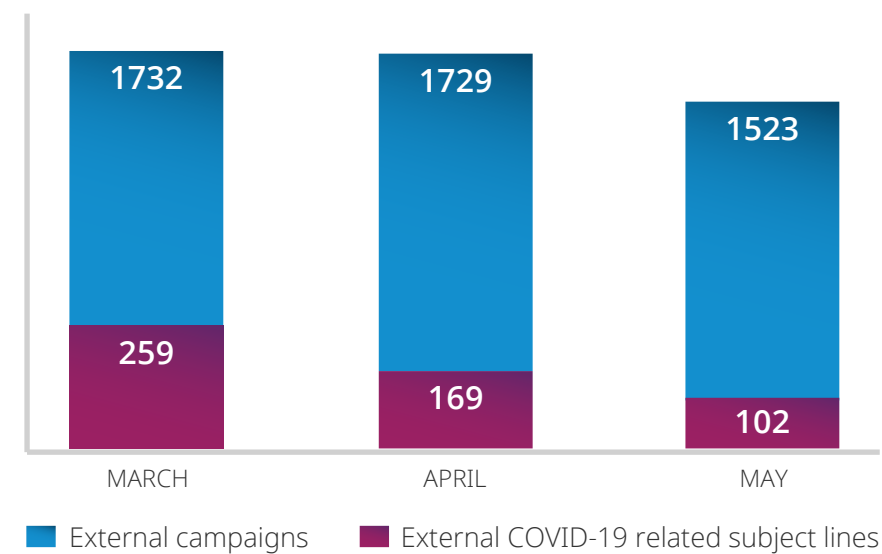
COVID-19 THE NEW NORMAL

(April – May 2020)

EXTERNAL EMAIL ENGAGEMENT
REMAINS STABLE WHILE MAY SEES
AN INCREASE IN OPT-OUTS



NUMBER OF EXTERNAL CAMPAIGNS AND
COVID-19-RELATED SUBJECT LINES DROP
FROM MARCH TO MAY



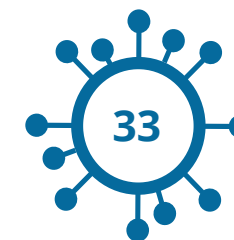
COVID-19 THE NEW NORMAL

(April – May 2020)

Remote working requires both mobile and desktop

Peaks in open times across the board occur in cycles for both devices. Mobiles are usually used before the start of the workday, during lunch and in the evening while desktops are used across the workday. This demonstrates that people remain connected throughout all times and are using both devices on a regular basis. Also, there is a bit of discipline when it comes to starting and ending the workday. This dispels the myth that remote work breeds less productivity because we are seeing communications and engagement increase throughout the lockdown. Even when employees are not monitored, they still do the work in a disciplined manner and put in extra hours when needed.





EASTER WEEK 2020

(Week April 12)

The Easter holiday this year was rife with activity

Easter is a public holiday in many countries. Some countries give people 1-2 days off. For instance, Canada, Finland, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom all celebrate Good Friday while over 110 countries including Ireland, the UK and some in Central Europe observe Easter Monday.

Despite the shorter work week, clients sent 86% more emails in 2020 when compared to 2019 for the same time frame

with 102% increase in external emails and 40% increase in internal emails. Open rates remained similar at 40% while clicks slightly decreased from 5.1% to 3.6% despite doubling list size and increasing frequency. This shows everyone was working and connected despite the holidays.

While the volume of communications was on average 17% lower due to the shorter week, it rebounded quickly the following week with a 30% increase across the board.

EASTER WEEK 2020 VS. 2019

68%

More emails

102%

More external emails

40%

More internal emails

100%

More contacts used



3 SPOTLIGHT ON COUNTRIES

Email can be an efficient tool to communicate when time is of the essence. However, the way in which you use this medium can differ during a crisis situation in part due to cultural sensitivities and local customs. This report notes a few observations in our clients' January to May 2020 email statistics based on StoneShot activity in the financial sector in the US, UK, France, Germany, Italy, and APAC.



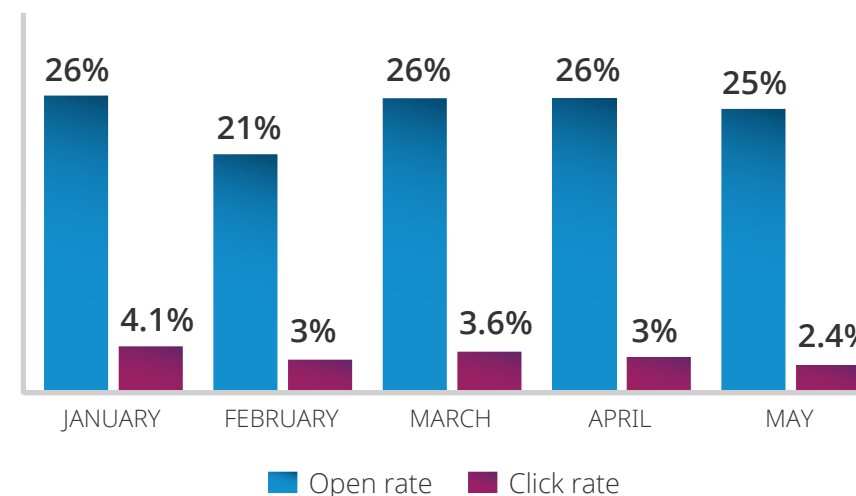


UNITED STATES

The US had a temporary dip in open and click through rates in February but both metrics continued increasing through to March and April.

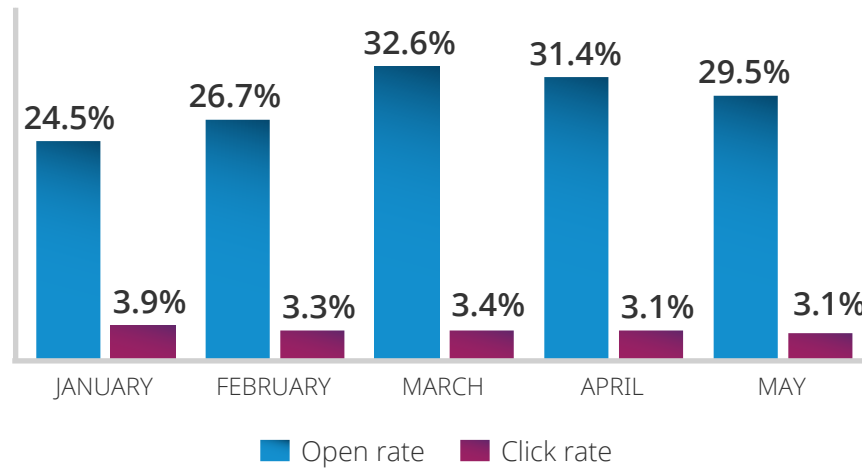
Continuing throughout the lockdown, engagement seems to have sky-rocketed for the US in March and April. Open rate increased to 26.3% while click rate remained at the 3.0-3.6% level (compared to 21.4% and 3.6% respectively in March). This is a 5% increase in open rate paired with a 317% increase in campaign volume which means that people were more productive in April once they've adjusted to their work from home conditions or they could be more interested in the content that our clients send. However, this region has the highest click rates in March.

US EMAIL ENGAGEMENT RISING AFTER FEBRUARY DIP



UNITED KINGDOM

UK OPEN RATES RISE MONTH ON MONTH WHILE CLICK RATES REMAIN STEADY

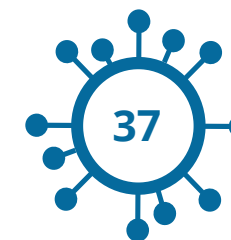


The UK had a steadily increasing open rate from January to April while their click rate averaged at 3.4%.

As the demographic with the highest open rate in April, the UK's open rate increased to 31.4% while click rate decreased to 3.1% (compared to 32.6% and 3.4% respectively in March). They also had the highest engagement rate (percentage of email contacts who have opened or clicked an email within the past month) at 42% compared to other regions. It seems like this region also adjusted well to lockdown working. However, we observed a slight dip by 2% in open rates in May compared with April.

Interestingly, desktop (15%) and mobile (16%) opens in March and April are almost equal. The UK had the highest mobile open rate out of all geographies.

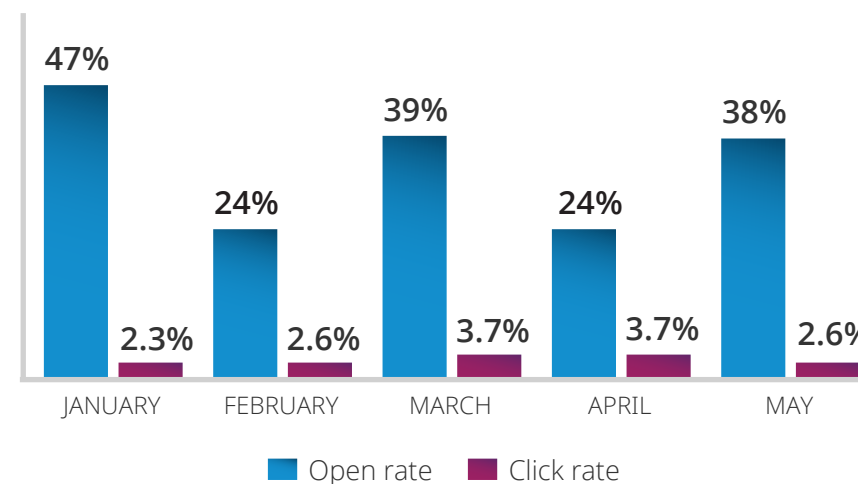


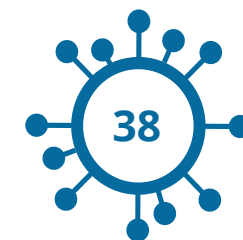


FRANCE

The unique situation of the French market during the pandemic resulted in different metrics related to client engagement, number of communications mentioning COVID-19 and open rates, which did not follow the global averages. The communications around coronavirus started much later in France than in other regions and the clear increase can be noted from March.

DROP IN FRANCE'S ENGAGEMENT RATES FROM JANUARY TO MAY





FRANCE

French emails did not follow bi-weekly cycles

After analyzing email campaigns we manage globally, we noticed a curious trend. The number of emails increased across all our clients in odd weeks (+102% on average) and decrease in even weeks (-66% on average) when compared with a previous week, across all our clients' data. However, the bi-weekly trend is not replicated in the French market. Instead, we observed a slight increase in mailings in the 3rd week of each month.

Event invitations and newsletters were preferred

Since the beginning of the year, the best performing types of content in terms of open rates across all our clients in France were Newsletters (42% on average since the beginning of the year) and the lowest Fund fact sheets (22% average open rates). The highest click rates were observed for Event invitations (11%) and the lowest for Market commentaries (1.5%). In France, we noticed lower click to open rates compared with global figures or other European countries.

They worked long hours but still shorter when compared to the rest of the world

In France, we saw significant open rates in the period from January to March outside of the core working hours of 9am-5pm CET. Both desktop and mobile activity started at 7am and ended sharply at 8pm. However, the rest of the world carried on with work up until 11pm.

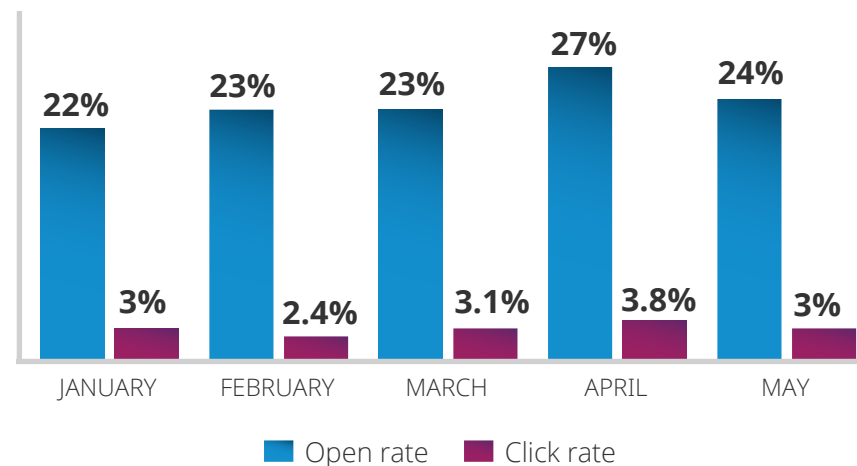
In April, France's open rate decreased to 23.6% while click rate remained at 3.7% (compared to 38.6% in March). This is a 63% decrease in open rate overall. However, France had the highest mobile open rate compared to other regions, suggesting they may be juggling work with other responsibilities around the house. Finally, we observed an important increase by 38% in open rates in May, equalling 38.1% compared with 23.6% in April. It was paired with a significant increase in campaign volume by 67% between April and May.





ITALY

ITALY'S CAMPAIGN ENGAGEMENT INCREASED FROM JANUARY TO APRIL

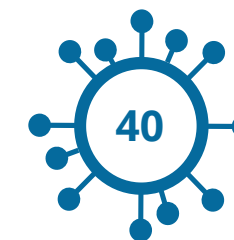


Italy's open rate remained at the same level in February and March (around 23.4%) but had a higher click rate at 3.1% in March (compared to 2.4% in February) highlighting the fact that COVID-19 disrupted productivity.

However, Italy's open rate increased to 27.5% in April (compared to 20.6% in March) and click rate increased to 3.8% (compared to 3.1% in March). It's also worth noting that the campaign volume doubled and the send volume is 6x that of March so things seemed to be picking up the pace from April.

In May, we observed a 3% decrease in open rates (24.5%) as well as a bigger dip in clicks (3% compared with 3.8% in April), together with a 29% decrease in sent volume.





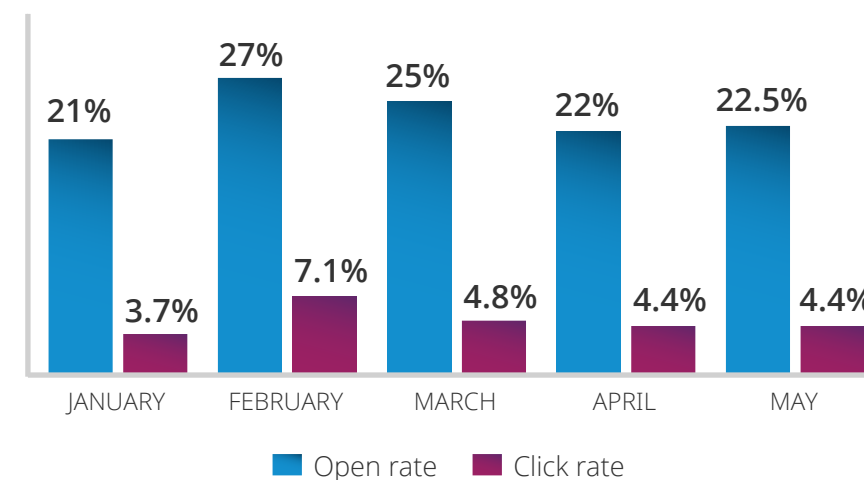
GERMANY

German open rate increased in February at 27.1% (compared to 21.5% in January) while click rate increased to 7.1% (compared to 3.7% in January). Open rate decreased to 24.9% and click rate decreased to 4.8% in March but campaign volumes increased by 64% between March and April.

March has more than double the campaign volume of January and February averaged out, while send volume in March is more than triple that of January and February averaged out. This suggests that the open and click rate was impacted by the addition of new contacts.

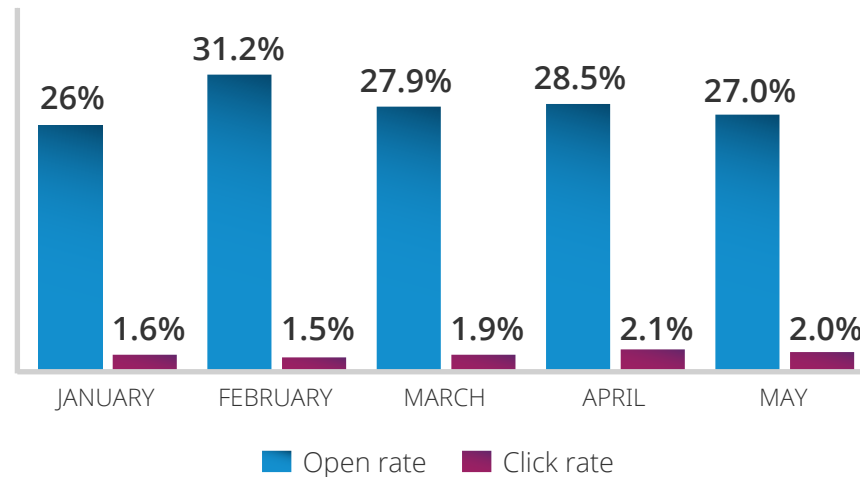
In April, German engagement dropped further with open rate at 22% (compared to 24.9% in March) and click rate at 4.4% (compared to 4.8% in March). It is worth noting that average open rate remained at 23.7% since the start of the year, so COVID-19 did not cause a lower open rate. While the open and click rates remained at the same level in April and May, the sent volume decreased by 42% in May.

GERMANY'S ENGAGEMENT PEAKED IN FEB AND HAS FALLEN SINCE DUE TO GROWING SEND LISTS



APAC

APAC'S ENGAGEMENT RATES SAW A SLIGHT DECREASE AFTER FEBRUARY



APAC's open rate decreased in March to 27.9% (compared to 31% in February) but click rate increased to 1.9% (compared to 1.5% in February). Since email campaign volume increased by 33%, it seems that the decrease in open rate was impacted by the addition of new contacts.

The total number of campaigns sent decreased by 5.3% in April when compared to March. However, open and click rates seemed constant at 27.9% (compared 27.9% in March) and 1.9-2.1% for both months respectively. This suggests that things normalized in APAC by April and remained at the similar levels in May.



4 EVENT MARKETING STATISTICS DURING THE PANDEMIC

VIDEO STATISTICS

(March 2020)

1,130%

Increase in contacts used vs. February

13.5-15%

High open rates despite enlarged lists

1,700%

Increase in event cancellations vs. January and February

0%

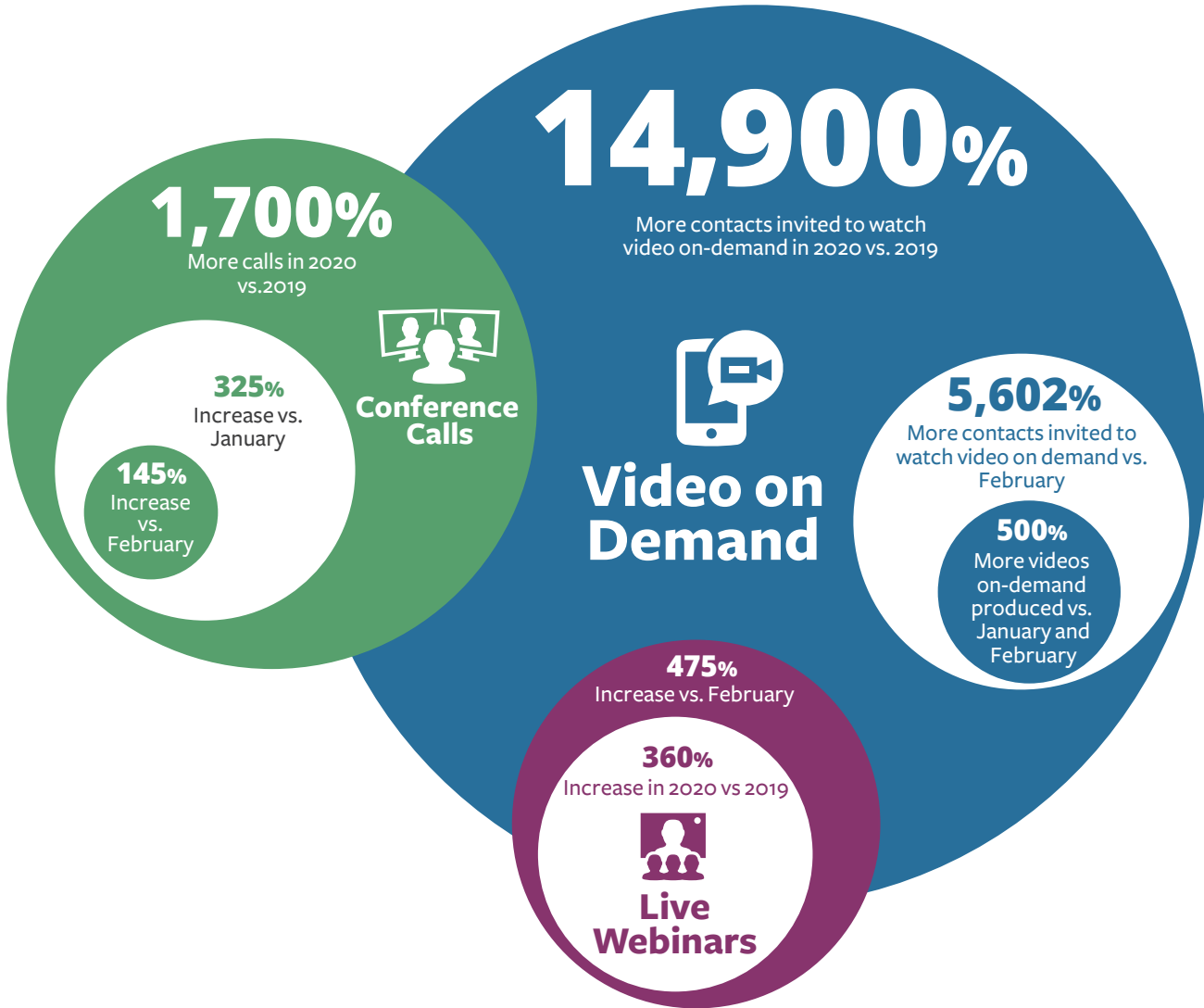
Unsubscribes for event invitations

8,113%

Increase of unique opens in 2020 vs. 2019

4.8%

Same click rates as in Jan-Feb despite enlarged contact lists





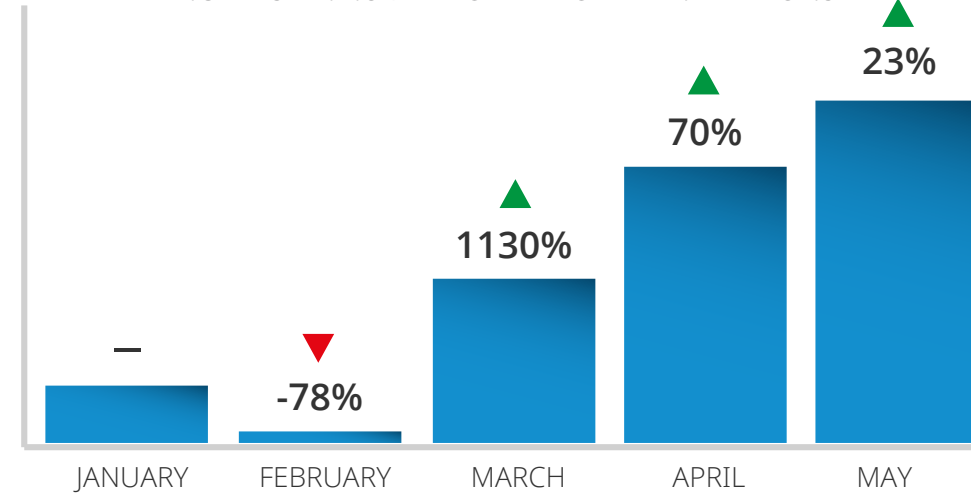
EVENT MARKETING TRENDS

Webinars are suddenly popular

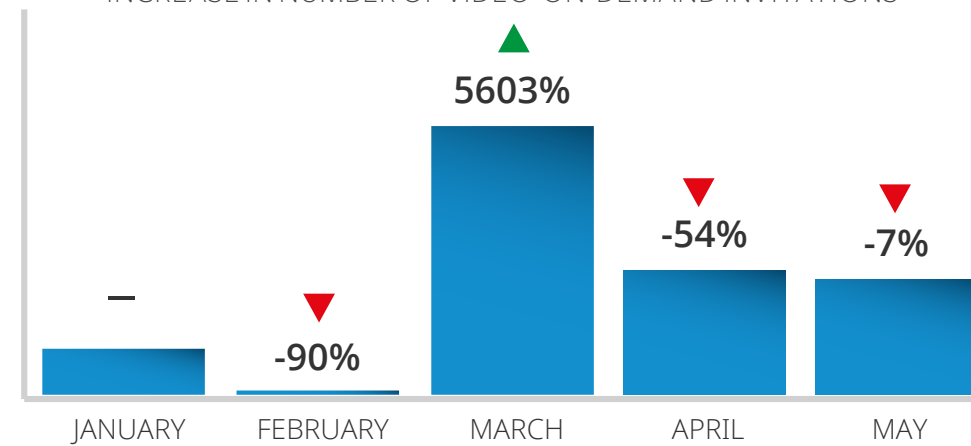
In-person meetings and live events are valuable when building relationships in the financial services sector. However, with social distancing, webinars may be the next best thing. There was a clear increase in webinars with some of our clients transitioning from once per quarter to twice per week.

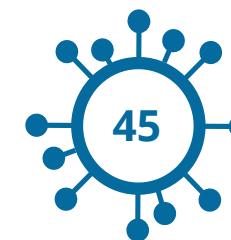
Webinars address urgent pieces of market information to reassure internal and external stakeholders en masse. However, this approach varies depending on geography. In Europe, our clients in Germany and Switzerland claimed webinars are reserved for certain types of communications and will not replace written articles or blog posts. ►

INCREASE IN NUMBER OF VIDEO LIVE INVITATIONS



INCREASE IN NUMBER OF VIDEO-ON-DEMAND INVITATIONS





EVENT MARKETING TRENDS

◀ Live video invitations increased by 475% in March vs. February, and by 360% compared to March 2019. The number of contacts used also was much higher with a 1,130% increase in the volume of invitations sent compared to February 2020. Despite enlarged lists, the engagement remained high (15% for February, 13.5% for March and 14.5% for April).

Encouraging webinar engagement rates led many of our contacts to rethink their video strategy. Video has been the medium of choice for a while, but video production is too costly and takes too much time, while an on-demand webinar can have similar impact for a fraction of the cost. With the dynamically changing market situation, timeliness is key and a webinar

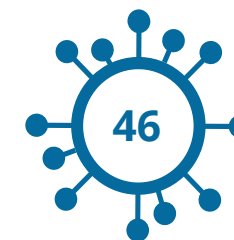
has a clear advantage over a video as it can be organized and launched immediately. Finally, the fact that everyone is getting used to lower budget production quality with TV shows being recorded with less staff or simple TikTok uploads makes shiny videos look too perfect or even artificial.

Events are compensated with other channels

The void left by cancelled events is replaced with webcasts, videos, webinars, more calls, more emails, and more social media. There was a 40% increase in emails sent since the start of 2020 and two of our clients increased external communications from once a month to twice a week. Some have added new ongoing campaigns e.g. Market Weekly podcasts.

The highest number of conference calls across all our accounts were delivered in March following event cancellations and travel restrictions. It led to a 325% increase globally vs. January 2020 and 145% compared with February 2020 but also represented a volume 17 times higher compared to March 2019. ▶





EVENT MARKETING TRENDS

◀ **Video on-demand is rising**

Video on-demand invitations in March grew by 500% compared with January and February, while the number of contacts grew by 5,602% vs. the previous month and by 14,900% compared with the same period in 2019. While open rates seem lower (over 70% in March 2019 vs 36.8% in March 2020), the number of unique opens increased by 8,113% for the same period, and the click rates remained at the similar level of 4.8%.

Despite enlarged contact lists, the percentage of bounce backs remained very low at 0.0002% level, proving that a substantial effort was put into reviewing the database across all our clients. With the introduction of GDPR last year, we went through

multi-week or multi-month programs with our clients to introduce preference centers and tidy up their distribution lists.

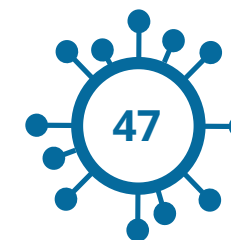
There was a rapid learning curve

The transition from in person to virtual did not happen smoothly overnight. Internal teams and clients had to rapidly learn how to use virtual alternatives. Joint processes between the event and content arms of the marketing teams had to be drawn up to make sure the team was aligned in producing and executing webinars. Businesses are also continuing to tweak the technology and process to make it smoother.

Virtual is here to stay

Many clients confirmed that the enforced change was a good opportunity for everyone to test video tools that had been available before but not widely used in the context of a more conservative financial industry. The successful implementation of this strategy gives virtual meetings a good chance to continue instead of in person events when government restrictions are lifted. ▶





EVENT MARKETING TRENDS

◀ Advantages of this shift are improved response time, lower expenses and lack of limitations due to travel availability. Sales teams can hold virtual meetings with existing clients so that they can service more people and save time travelling in the country or in the region, especially if the borders are still closed. One can also receive the same level of client service regardless of where they are in the world. Of course, new clients will still be offered in-person meetings if allowed.

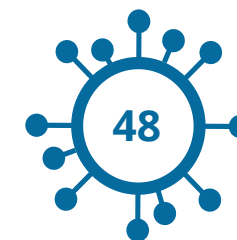
Overall engagement of virtual events across our clients is also encouraging. Event invitations score the highest in terms of overall interactions and longest read times.

Live events are postponed

Many of our clients have tentatively postponed live events to start in Q3 or Q4. However, since COVID-19 duration is uncertain, they are going to re-evaluate nearer the time if the live events can indeed push through. They would cancel participation in events if they could but are prohibited by contract clause limitations. Some clients confirmed that they foresaw Q3 and Q4 to be an extremely busy period in terms of events.

Physical events may potentially decrease in 2021 in favour of the virtual ones due to budget cuts and normality of webinars. Consequently, event companies, event venues and adjacent conference support services are struggling. The business model of offering organizations exclusive events in luxurious hotels needs to be revisited although it might rebound at some point as a competitive differentiator. ▶





EVENT MARKETING TRENDS

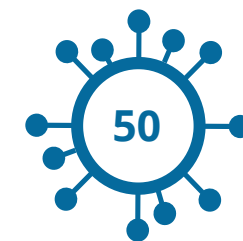
◀ **Clients are testing new technologies**

It seems that Webex, Asset.tv, BrightTALK and Zoom are the incumbent platforms of choice. However, some have reported temperamental behavior with Webex while Zoom has security concerns. A client implemented workarounds when a platform stopped working by pre-recording as much of the event as possible. Since financial services webinars usually contain sensitive information, both stability and security of the online platform is of paramount importance. As a result, some newer platforms are also being tested and looked at as alternative options.

One client is testing new technology like holograms for virtual meetings to prepare for situations where in-person meetings are not possible due to international travel restrictions e.g. UK representatives going to Germany for a presentation. ●



5 PSYCHOLOGY OF CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS



CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

Insights from our clients and psychological principles

Fear is a motivator for action

Earlier communications from our clients reflected this sense of urgency and fear to motivate for action especially in the transition to a fully remote workforce and virtually servicing their clients. Most communications explained how the business was going to stay safe, remain functional and most importantly take action in cushioning the economic impact of the crisis.

Without the emotion of fear, most clients and companies might have carried on business as usual, ignoring necessary social distancing measures to slow the spread of the virus.

There is a need to communicate simply

A part of the brain called the amygdala is activated in someone experiencing fear. Subsequently, this activates a series of

physiological changes called the fight-or-flight response.

This response is intended to make some ready to react to potential danger. However, simple communication is important for someone whose fight-or-flight response is activated because attention is focused on eliminating the existing threat.

Our clients have followed suit with providing timely but realistic and factual communications that are easy to digest following the latest news including content about the markets, asset classes and products. Some examples include the rebound of oil prices (and its ongoing saga), recovery plans and lower interest rates. One has increased the frequency of communication from once a month to twice a week to account for this.





There is a need to instil trust

An overwhelming amount of fear held for a long period of time has severely debilitating effects on the human body. Therefore, instilling trust by demonstrating thought leadership and authority is important to eventually reduce the fear experienced by your stakeholders after making the necessary transitions. This can be the difference between keeping or losing a customer. Without trust, people won't follow advice.

One of our clients gained additional custom because a current customer of theirs liked the proactive way in how they handled the crisis. A trend that we see is holding regular webinars and delivering communications that can reassure clients about proper handling of the situation.

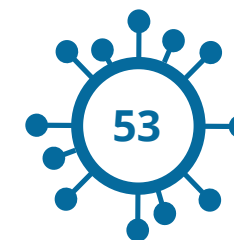
Think for the client

The lateral prefrontal cortex has lowered activity in someone experiencing fear. This area of the brain is also responsible for working memory, planning and reasoning. It's probably why someone might have trouble thinking clearly during a crisis. Therefore, our customers have started to amp up thought leadership communications in relation to COVID-19.

Some examples are launching Market Weekly podcasts, enriching blogs with macroeconomic and investment strategies addressing coronavirus, personalized emails from client relationship managers and media campaigns on thought leadership. Focusing on intellectual capital is reaping a strong content performance.



6
**TIPS FOR
FINANCIAL
SERVICES
MARKETERS**



Adapt your email marketing tactics to the situation

Email can be an efficient tool to communicate when time is of the essence. However, the way in which you use this medium can differ in a pandemic situation so it's important to monitor your reports and see what's working and what can be improved.

Get your tone right

In a crisis, authenticity is more important than ever. It's critical to communicate in a simple and honest manner rather than superfluous jargon. Whilst we get that jargon implies professionalism, people experiencing anxiety process simple words better. Keep it short, sweet and simple!

Get into the client's head and answer their questions before they ask

As more events unfold which can have a significant impact or outlook on the market, it's good to tell your clients what you are doing to keep your products valuable to them. In absence of answers, telling them that you are aware of the event and are working on a solution is the next best thing. This creates an atmosphere of transparency and open communication which is crucial in establishing trust during trying times.

Try to plan for various scenarios and prepare different versions of content in advance

Whilst there is still a lot of uncertainty in the air, there are various predicted and simulated scenarios which may or may not come to pass. Acknowledging that you are getting together a game plan for various scenarios, what's changing and what's staying the same, may give a bit more comfort to your clients and help with uncertainty. ►



◀ **Tell your clients when to expect to hear from you**

To reduce the amount of inbound queries to your client service or account management team, you may want to tell them that you will send a weekly or bi-weekly update to address the latest developments or updates.

Shift formerly offline marketing activity to secure online channels

Events and meetings took up a big chunk of client activity pre-COVID-19. These channels were chosen because they were the most accessible way to build relationships, convey trust, transparency and security. There are a variety of secure online channels that can host group events and 1:1 meetings. Explore, activate new and scale existing digital channels to support customer engagement.

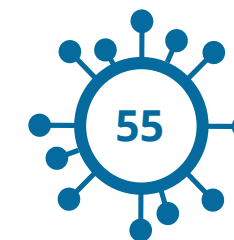
Make your titles stand out

With more emails hitting inboxes, it's important to put some effort into crafting a subject line that's descriptive, catchy and relevant to your reader. Since some of our clients came from journalism, they found ways to refer to the situation by using positive language or highlighting positivity.

Example themes

- An update on the measures we're taking
- Our commitment to clients in these challenging times
- Remarkable Leadership for remarkable times
- Opportunity through adversity
- Some calm after the storm
- In the midst of every crisis lies opportunity





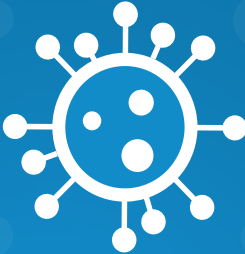
StoneShot is an email marketing, marketing automation, and event management platform provider for financial services marketers. Founded in 2001, we offer technology, insights, and agency services financial marketers need to succeed.

Our intuitive platform and in-house team of strategists, designers, developers, and account specialists offer the flexibility to get each client where they need to be in their digital transformation journey and achieve their business goals. When it comes to digital marketing, we understand one size does not fit all, and reaching the right audience, at the right time, with the right message, is crucial.

We work with leading brands including Barings, HSBC, Invesco, and UBS, and have offices in London, New York, Paris, and Milan.

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