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ADA INCLUSIVE EMAIL MARKETING:

The Hidden Benefits of Accessible Email Design & Compliance

Accessibility Concerns
with Image-Based Emails

Completely image-based email seems like a win from a branding perspective. You get complete control over fonts, images, colors, etc.

But there's a big issue with image-only emails that many brands and even large marketing agencies overlook – **accessibility**.

Accessible emails are **crucial** for your business because they:

| Enable you to reach a wider audience	Enhance your organization's trust and credibility	Differentiate you from your competitors	Protect your reputation by reducing legal risks

How **image -only emails** impact accessibility.

Image-only emails can make it difficult for people with a visual impairment, cognitive impairments, physical limitations, and other accessibility concerns to access the email's content. Accessibility matters because it helps ensure your customers get the information they need, whether that's the discount code for your upcoming sale or a transactional order confirmation.

This email, from a LARGE financial services company, in default view (images off) is **broken**, **unactionable** and not **ADA compliant**.

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Why accessibility matters for the **visually impaired.**
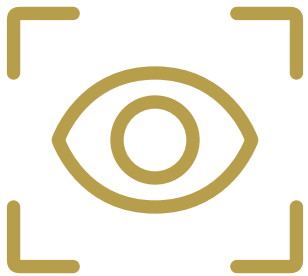
According to the CDC, about **20 million** Americans have some degree of visual impairment, which includes everything from poor vision to blindness.

That's approximately **8%** of the total population in the United States.

Globally, an estimated **2.2 billion** people have a visual impairment, according to the World Health Organization.

Many people with visual impairments use screen readers to navigate the online world. Screen readers are an assistive technology that reads the screen out loud to the person using it.

In an email with both text and images, the person will hear the written content of the email plus any descriptive language in the alt tags of the images.

With all-image emails, there's much less available for the screen reader to read. There's no text in the email, so the screen reader must rely solely on the alt tags. And, in many cases, those alt tags haven't been coded with screen readers in mind, which leaves the recipient unable to access the content of the email.

Click here to listen to a recording of a screen reader reading an image based email.

Designing for accessibility
does not just include those with disabilities.

Image -only emails are rarely **mobile friendly**.

Even if you are not worried about your consumers blocking images, there are many other factors to consider. According to the Porch Group Media, about 3 in 5 consumers check their email on the go (mobile) and **75% say they use their smartphones most often to check email.**

Emails that are image-only and designed for desktop viewing can be challenging to see on mobile devices, while those optimized for mobile may appear too large on computers. For instance, images might stack on mobile devices, resulting in jumbled content. Or text that is not live can be shrunk to an unreadable size.

It is important to note the growing number of subscribers who rely on **voice assistants** to have their emails read to them.

Unlike screen readers, voice assistants typically do not recognize ALT text or other HTML attributes. This means that even if your email, which consists only of images, includes ALT text, it will not be accessible to this segment of your audience. The email will appear entirely blank to them. This highlights the necessity of using live text whenever possible.

Translation can also be a barrier to presenting a clear message.

For someone who receives your email, but speaks a different language, image-only emails are also a problem. Non-live text, or text in images can not be translated by the computer.

And don't forget **file size.**

The size of an email can lead to slow loading times or even failure to load, especially for subscribers with slow internet connections or those using mobile data. Bad connections while traveling are common! Even with a fast internet connection, images might not load quickly enough, posing a potential risk when you are sending image-only emails.

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Designing emails with accessibility in mind.

Web and email design standards for accessibility are offered by the Worldwide Web Consortium (W3C) through their Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

At first glance, the guidelines can feel overwhelming because they cover a lot. Some of the key components for accessible email design include things like a logical order of information, clear language and calls to action, adequate font size, contrast between background color and text color, and descriptive alt text for images.

When you design emails with accessibility in mind, everyone wins. Accessible emails are typically easier for all customers to read, not just those with a visual impairment, due to font size, color contrast, and live responsive text rather than image-based static text.
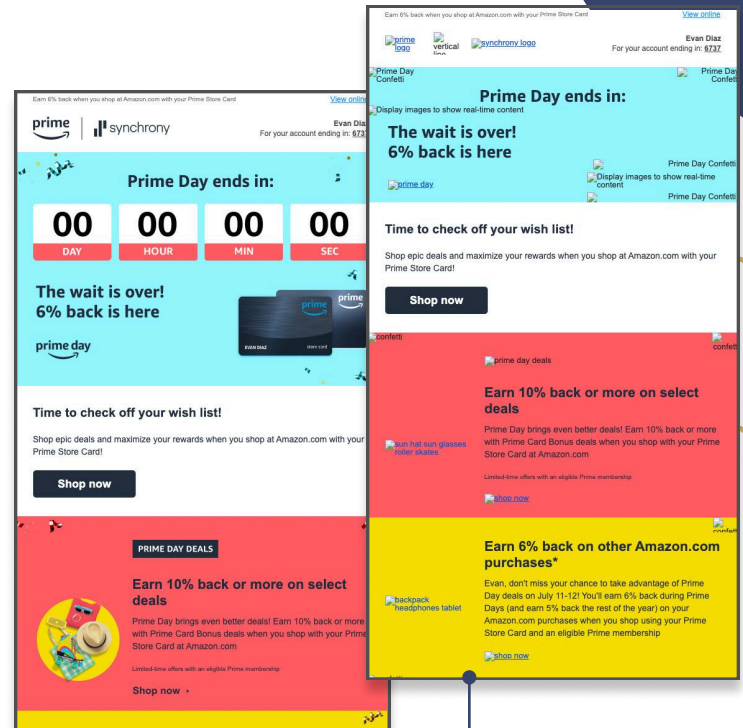
These examples show emails that were designed and coded with accessibility in mind. When images are off they are still actionable and ADA compliant.

About **RPE Origin**

We are the industry's only vendor-agnostic, email-centric agency serving enterprise companies throughout their digital journey. We aim to be an indispensable partner for enterprise and agency clients who rely on email for success. Whether you need help choosing a new ESP, enhancing automated B2C or B2B customer journeys, or connecting data points across your tech stack, we help you move from simple to sophisticated to drive more revenue through email marketing.

Our team lives email every day, and that includes both email marketing and maximizing the connective tissue across all digital channels. With our customized approach and flexible services, we can do everything from one piece of the puzzle to the entire picture.
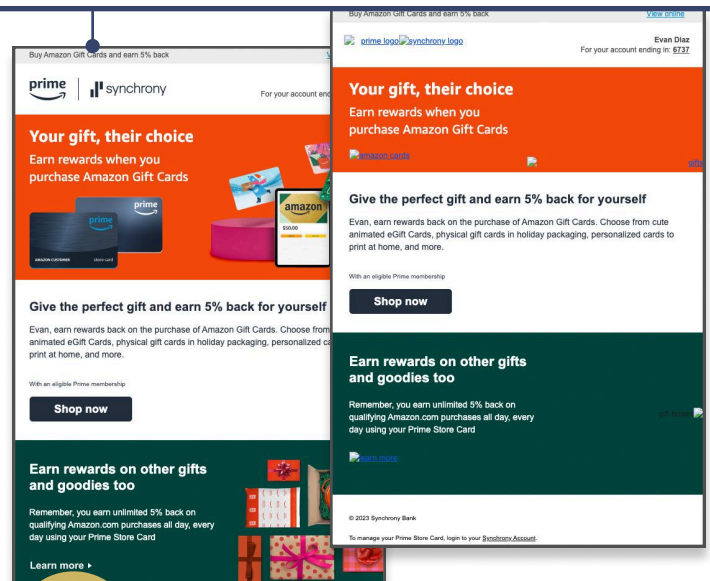
Need help designing accessible emails?
Contact our team to get the conversation started.

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