The Buyer's Guide to Email Marketing Software

An in-depth look at 5 leading Email Marketing products

Curated from End-User Reviews on:

trustradius

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Table of Contents

ABOUT TRUSTRADIUS

TrustRadius is the leading site for business software users to share real-world insights through in-depth reviews and networking. We help users make better product selection, implementation and usage decisions. Every reviewer is authenticated and every review vetted before publication. Unlike simple rating sites, TrustRadius reviews are structured and substantive, averaging more than 400 words each. Reviewers can also update their reviews to keep them current. Founded by successful entrepreneurs and backed by the Mayfield Fund, TrustRadius is bringing transparency and efficiency to the $3.7 trillion business technology market.

To learn more, visit www.trustradius.com.

About this Guide

This guide is based upon 101 in-depth reviews and 256 ratings of five email marketing software products contributed by end-users to TrustRadius. We've focused on some of the most commonly researched and reviewed email marketing products in order to provide buyers with insights into leading products and vendors.
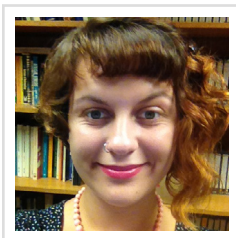
In order to be included in this guide, the product must have at least 15 reviews on TrustRadius. Each reviewer was vetted and validated by a TrustRadius team member. The result is an independent analysis, uninfluenced by vendors or anyone else with an agenda. As with our other buyer's guides, we hope this report will help you select the email marketing software that best fits your needs.

Email marketing software is designed to help a company build customer loyalty, increase brand recognition, and make sales via email, one of the most efficient means of actively getting a message out and maintaining contact with a company's customer base. Products range from simple batch-and-blast tools, to more complex tools capable of sending personalized messages. All email marketing tools should be able to facilitate big sends, though conceptions of "big" vary widely across vendors and customer company sizes. Other standard features include CAN-SPAM compliance, performance metrics (e.g. bounced emails, subscriber activity reports, etc.) to help determine how effective a campaign was, and autoresponders for sending out promotional materials to existing customers. Some email marketing software can integrate with customer relationship management systems (CRMs), content management systems (CMS), analytics products, and/or ecommerce platforms. Pricing models vary but pay-per-email or pay-per-subscriber plans are common. Free plans exist, as well as highly-tailored enterprise level solutions. Company size, industry and use case continue to be important in determining the best-fit solution.
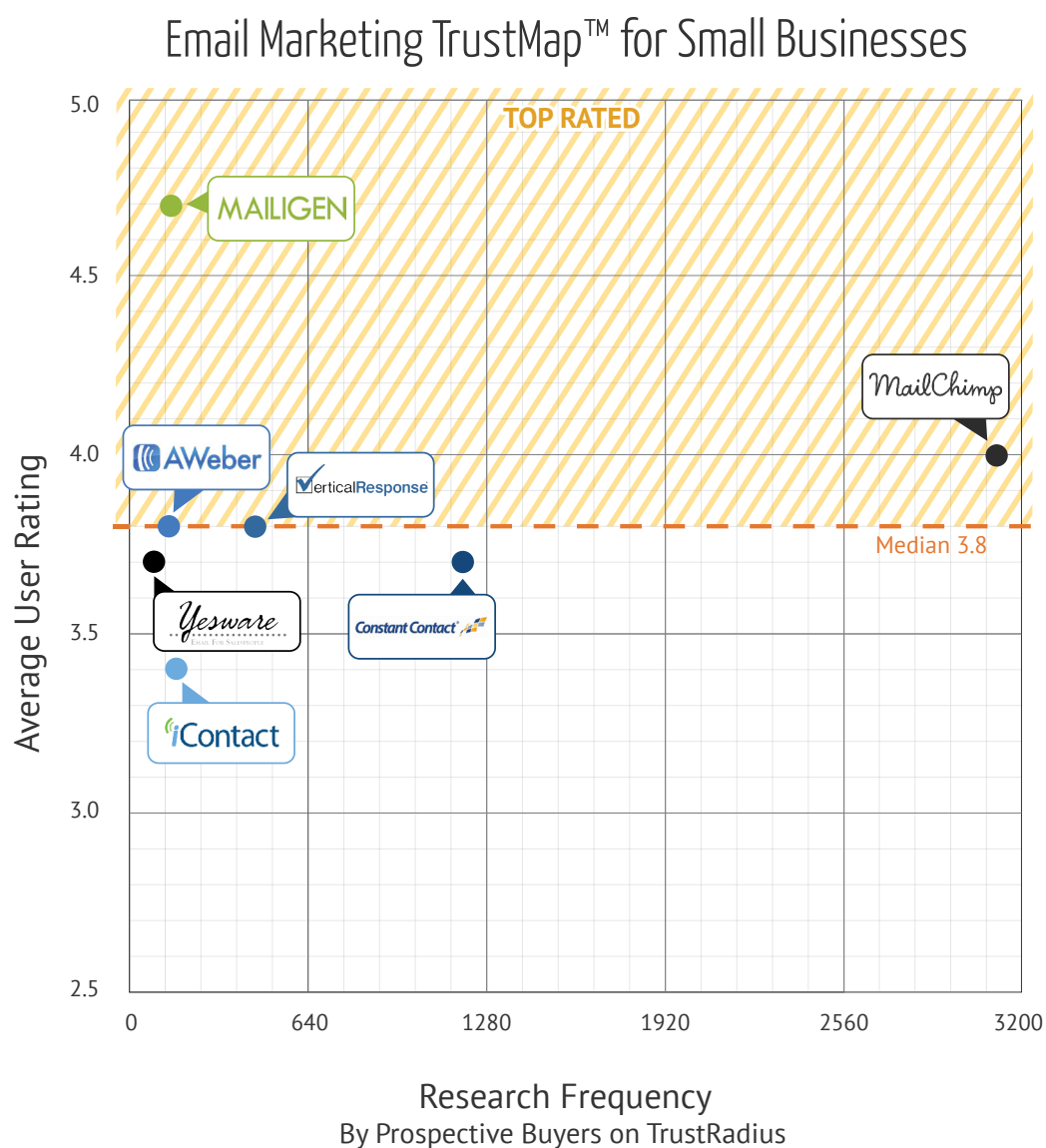
In addition to basic email marketing features, some products included here also contain Marketing Automation capabilities. The dividing line between these categories is blurring as businesses become more sophisticated in their marketing operations and vendors make acquisitions and establish marketing suites or partner ecosystems, striving to offer a complete range of capabilities under one roof.

As always, we'd love to hear your feedback on this guide.

Emily Sue Tomac
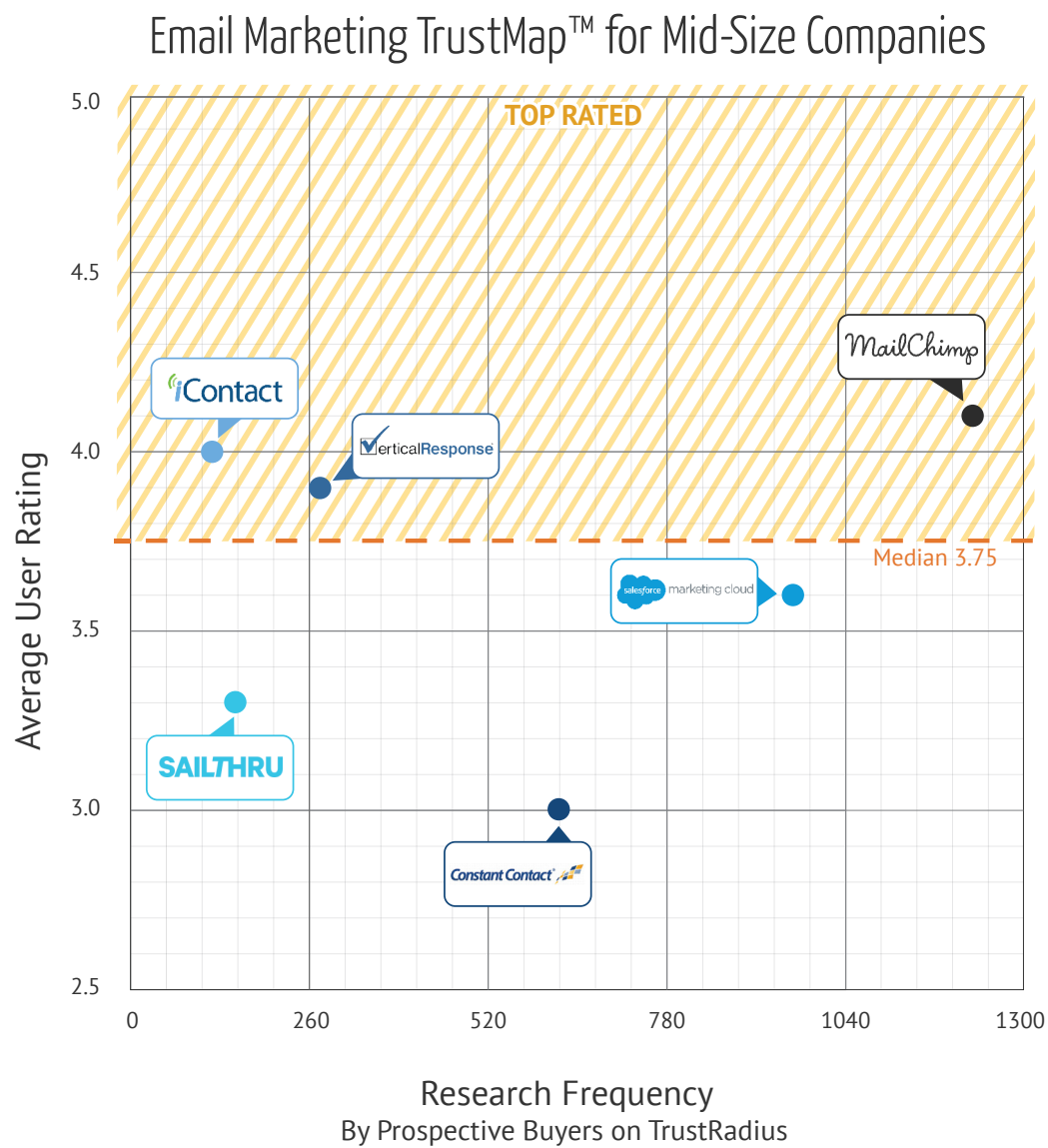Research Associate, TrustRadius

The Best Email Marketing Software for Small Businesses

Email Marketing TrustMap™ for Small Businesses

Average User Rating (y-axis): 2.5 to 5.0

TOP RATED

Products shown: MAILIGEN (~4.7), MailChimp (~4.0), AWeber (~3.8), VerticalResponse (~3.8), Yesware (~3.7), Constant Contact (~3.65), iContact (~3.4)

Median 3.8

Research Frequency (x-axis): 0, 640, 1280, 1920, 2560, 3200
By Prospective Buyers on TrustRadius

Based on ratings and monthly pageviews on TrustRadius.com as of 08/01/2015

trustradius™

The Best Email Marketing Software for Mid-Size Companies

Email Marketing TrustMap™ for Mid-Size Companies

Based on ratings and monthly pageviews on TrustRadius.com as of 08/01/2015

Methodology

The TrustMap™ compares Email Marketing software products, based on end-user satisfaction ratings and evaluation frequency. To be included on a particular TrustMap™, a product must have 6+ reviews and ratings in that segment. Most have many more.

For this guide, we have segmented data by the size of the company using the product, based on number of employees. Our market segments are:

» Small Businesses: 1-50 employees

» Mid-Size Companies: 51-1,000 employees

We have created each TrustMap on two dimensions:

1. **Average User Rating:** The average "Likelihood to Recommend" rating—a representation of overall satisfaction—by users who have written reviews on TrustRadius.

2. **Research Frequency by Prospective Buyers on TrustRadius:** This metric reflects how often a product is researched on TrustRadius. It is measured by monthly unique page views of pages associated with a given product, including product descriptions, reviews and comparisons. Products with large installed bases or those experiencing significant growth momentum are evaluated more frequently.

The red dotted line depicts the median user rating. All products above the red line are classified as "Top Rated". Products further to the right on the graphic are those products that are most frequently searched for on TrustRadius. High search volumes may indicate either positive or negative sentiment—people evaluating a product either to select or replace.

Other products of note not featured in this guide include:

» CheetahMail

» Oracle Responsys

» BlueHornet

» Mailigen

» Sailthru

» AWeber

» Yesware

Product Comparison Overview

AVERAGE FEATURE RATINGS	Constant Contact	iContact	MailChimp	salesforce marketing cloud	VerticalResponse	EMAIL MARKETING AVERAGE
Likelihood to recommend	7.8	7.7	8.0	7.8	7.9	7.5
Likelihood to renew	7.9	8.0	8.6	8.4	8.5	8.0
Product usability	7.6	8.6	8.0	N/A	8.6	8.0
Support	8.0	8.9	6.0	8.0	8.8	7.9
Implementation	N/A	N/A	6.7	N/A	9.3	N/A

Source: The Buyer's Guide to Email Marketing Software

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	Constant Contact	iContact	MailChimp	salesforce marketing cloud	VerticalResponse
Starting Price	$20/month (500 contacts)	$14/month (500 contacts)	Free (2,000 subscribers and 12,000 emails per month)	$400/month (250k messages)	Free (1,000 contacts and 4,000 emails per month)
Number of Customers	650K+	1M+ users	1.2M users	N/A	N/A
Market Segment Focus*	Small Businesses (60%)	Small Businesses (54%)	Small Businesses (66%)	Enterprises (51%)	Small Businesses (59%)
Most Compared to**	» MailChimp » Salesforce.com » VerticalResponse » Infusionsoft » HubSpot	» GetResponse » Constant Contact » VerticalResponse » AWeber » MailChimp	» VerticalResponse » Constant Contact » HubSpot » Zoho CRM » Infusionsoft	» Marketo » Pardot » HubSpot » Adobe Campaign » Silverpop	» MailChimp » Constant Contact » Mailigen » GetResponse » Bronto Marketing Platform

Based on company sizes of users who reviewed this product on TrustRadius
**Based on product comparisons run by visitors on TrustRadius*
Source: The Buyer's Guide to Email Marketing Software

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Constant Contact
Software Profile & Review Summary

Constant Contact

★★★☆☆ (61)
3.3 out of 5

Constant Contact is an inexpensive bulk email tool designed for SMB customers. Pricing starts at $20/month for the Email Plan with up to 500 contacts, or $45/month for the Email Plus Plan, which includes some automation features. Although in the past some reviewers described Constant Contact as dated, recent reviews say the vendor has updated templates and improved social media and events integrations.

Summary of Constant Contact Reviews

CONSTANT CONTACT PROS	CONSTANT CONTACT CONS
Basic email design » Constant Contact walks users through the design process. » Templates are attractive, professional, and easy to use.	**Performance** » Some users found Constant Contact to be slow and/or glitchy.
Basic reporting » Basic email performance measurements, such as bounces and reads, are helpful and straightforward.	**Images** » Images are unnecessarily difficult to upload and format.
User-friendly » Easy to learn. » Allows users to create emails and campaigns quickly. » Great for novices, small businesses, and non-profits.	**Customization/Flexibility** » Most users said that Constant Contact was hard to customize, and not suited to complex (enterprise) needs. » Specifically, users had trouble with custom actions like uploading and segmenting lists, re-formatting emails, and integrating to WordPress or their CRM.
Good budget option » Users describe Constant Contact as reasonably priced—a good budget option for businesses that need efficient email marketing but can't afford a marketing automation tool.	**More advanced analytics** » Analytic insights could be more sophisticated; user behavior tracking could be more specific and more actionable. » Current reporting capabilities are not adequate for enterprise use.
Events » Works well for promoting events and sending invites/tracking RSVPs.	
Support » Some users said support was very helpful, especially compared to their experiences with other email marketing vendors. However, others reported negative or inconsistent experiences, suggesting that support is hit or miss. » Note that Constant Contact is designed to be a basic DIY tool; users are not expected to need to contact support frequently. Some complaints about support have more to do with special use cases than with support team responsiveness and/or competency.	

Source: (18) User reviews of Constant Contact on TrustRadius

iContact
Software Profile & Review Summary

iContact is an easy-to-use and inexpensive email marketing product that was acquired by Vocus in 2012. The product is integrated with Facebook and Twitter and is aimed at SMBs looking to grow. There are four packages available: iContact, iContact Pro (including behavioral targeting, workflow automation, landing pages, etc.), iContact Premier (for large senders who want to strategize with the vendor), and iContact for Salesforce (an integrated app). For the basic iContact package, prices ranges from $14/month for 500 contacts to $117/month for 15k contacts.

(61)

3.8 out of 5

Summary of iContact Reviews

ICONTACT PROS	ICONTACT CONS
Segmentation and list management » Most users said segmentation and list management are easy in iContact. » In a few more complex cases, like with very large databases or automation, users said iContact list logic was limiting.	**Inconsistent across browsers/email providers** » Users reported inconsistent email formatting and deliverability across different email providers. » Users complained that email previews and testing did not adequately address the variety of browsers/email providers.
Salesforce Integration » Users who integrated iContact with Salesforce said the integration was convenient and effective.	**Images** » Users had trouble formatting (copying and pasting, resizing, editing) images and image captions. » Several users said they liked iContact's large image storage library; however, a few reported issues with uploading/storing images.
Customer support » Support is friendly, helpful, and responsive. » Users liked that phone support is available.	

Basic HTML knowledge » Many described iContact as easy to learn and easy to use, but sentiments are divided about whether the tool is well suited to non-technical users. Some said basic HTML knowledge is needed in order to take full advantage of the tool.
Email editor » Many describe the MessageBuilder, with its templates and module building blocks, as easy to use. » Some said they used the HTML with the MessageCoder to customize templates. » Although some users liked the selection of pre-built iContact templates, others said they would like to see more variety and/or more current templates. » Users reported various performance issues with design tools, for example, an email failing to save or a menu being dysfunctional.
Deliverability » Users said the IP address configuration can cause problems for deliverability. Some said the iContact spam rates differ for different email providers. » Some users said the iContact spam keyword filters and settings were strong.

Source: (21) User reviews of iContact on TrustRadius

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MailChimp
Software Profile & Review Summary

MailChimp is a mass marketing tool designed for emailing newsletters, automated messages, and targeted campaigns. The company was founded in 2001, and also owns Mandrill (an email infrastructure service) and TinyLetter (an email newsletter tool designed for individuals). MailChimp is known for providing basic batch-and-blast capabilities; however, they recently added additional features around automation, personalization, testing and analytics.

MailChimp has three pricing tiers, ranging from free to $2,650/month. The Entrepreneur offering (up to 2,000 subscribers with 12,000 emails per month) is free. The Growing business offering (up to 600,000 subscribers) and High volume sender offering (more than 600,000 subscribers) have sliding prices based on number of subscribers and emails per month.

MailChimp

★★★★☆ (97)
3.9 out of 5

TOP RATED EMAIL MARKETING SOFTWARE SMALL BUSINESSES — trustradius™ 2015

TOP RATED EMAIL MARKETING SOFTWARE MID-SIZE COMPANIES — trustradius™ 2015

Summary of MailChimp Reviews

MAILCHIMP PROS	MAILCHIMP CONS
Free version and pricing structure » For users with a small contact list (>2000 contacts) MailChimp offers a fully functional free version. Users said this was great for non-profits, contractors/consultants, and very small businesses. » Users expressed goodwill about the pricing tiers for paid versions; even with more than 2,000 contacts, they described MailChimp as affordable.	**Segmentation** » Segmentation is a pain point. » Users were frustrated with the interaction (or lack thereof) between "lists" and "groups" when trying to design segments. » MailChimp doesn't detect duplicate emails across lists, causing segmentation challenges. » Some users had better success with segmentation when they integrated MailChimp with their CRM.
Friendly UI » Tools are easy to use and navigate for non-technical users. » Users liked MailChimp's own branding and playful approach to email marketing.	**Support** » In general users said support availability and responsiveness have room for improvement. » Several found it difficult to get help from an actual support person (e.g. on the phone, versus email service tickets or FAQ). » Users said the blog and FAQ are sometimes helpful.
Integrations and plugins » There are a variety of helpful integrations and plugins to external tools such as WordPress and Google Analytics. » However, a few users felt MailChimp connectors were insufficient (to Outlook or Salesforce, for example). » Some users liked the integration of social network buttons into emails.	**Lock-out** » As with other email marketing tools, high bounce/spam rates can cause lists or accounts to become locked. Some users said that the MailChimp lock-out system is frustrating because it doesn't send user alerts and/or support is hard to contact about re-opening the account.
Mobile » Emails templates are mobile responsive. » MailChimp mobile app is helpful for reporting.	**Re-using and re-naming material** » The process for replicating/editing existing material (templates, campaigns, and lists) is somewhat inconvenient. » Re-naming material is challenging.

MAILCHIMP PROS	MAILCHIMP CONS

Simple mass-market tool

» Because MailChimp is so simple to use, an individual can put out batch-and-blast emails quickly and easily.

» In some cases HTML skills and workarounds can be used to make MailChimp more sophisticated (such as by creating new templates). However, many described MailChimp as too basic for organizations that regularly need to customize their campaigns.

» Lacks the bells and whistles of a marketing automation tool or marketing suite.

Source: (22) User reviews of MailChimp on TrustRadius

Salesforce Marketing Cloud Email (formerly ExactTarget)
Software Profile & Review Summary

salesforce marketing cloud

★★★★☆ (51)
3.6 out of 5

Salesforce Marketing Cloud Email is an email marketing platform with some mobile and automation features. It used to be called ExactTarget and was rebranded after its acquisition by Salesforce in June 2013. It supports multi-language and dynamic content. It also allows users to send real time transactional emails such as cart abandonment and shipping confirmations. Other key features include a drag-and-drop editor, Predictive Intelligence, A/B Testing Tools, Real Time Tracking and Graphical Reporting. The starting price is $400/month for the Basic package (250k messages). Pro, Corporate, and Enterprise packages are also available, ranging up to $25k/month for 150 million messages with 500k contacts per year.

Summary of Salesforce Marketing Cloud Email Reviews

SALESFORCE MARKETING CLOUD EMAIL PROS	SALESFORCE MARKETING CLOUD EMAIL CONS
Testing » Good A/B testing features. » A few users would like to see more advanced A/B testing in the future, such as multivariate testing, or A/B testing integrated with Salesforce.com. » Test emails are helpful for checking layout.	**Email templates/design** » While users can build and save flexible templates and even template systems, a broad selection of templates is not included out of the box. » Some users had difficulty formatting emails; email design and layout can be tricky.
Lists and segmentation » List import and management is easy. » Options for advanced segmentation (point and click or SQL). » Integration with Salesforce.com is helpful for leveraging behavioral data and creating dynamic segmentations.	**Social** » Social integrations exist but have room for improvement.
Automation » Automation features like scheduling tools, triggered emails, and the campaign Calendar are a strength, and an advantage over simpler email marketing tools.	**Performance speed** » Some users said they experienced slow load and run times.
Reporting » Users said tracking and performance metrics are robust. » Reports are clean and easy to view.	
Great for enterprises » Users said Salesforce Marketing Cloud Email was well suited to very large organizations, who may want to use it across different teams. » Users described the platform as cost effective for enterprises, whereas it might be too pricey (and overkill feature-wise) for smaller companies.	
IT/Developer-friendly » The possibilities for customization and creative development are robust. » Some users said the interface was workable even for marketers who don't know code. Others disagreed, recommending this product only for companies with internal IT resources. » Flexibility can lead to confusion. For example, technical users said that while they liked being able to incorporate data extensions into the platform, copying and coordinating data extensions could get convoluted.	
Customer service » Customer support and account management get mixed reviews. A few users commented they thought this was typical of Salesforce customer services more generally.	

Source: (20) User reviews of Salesforce Marketing Cloud Email on TrustRadius

VerticalResponse
Software Profile & Review Summary

VerticalResponse Inc. provides a suite of self-service marketing solutions for small businesses including email marketing, social media marketing, event marketing, direct mail marketing and online surveys. VerticalResponse says its mission is to empower small businesses and non-profit organizations to easily and affordably create, manage and analyze their own marketing campaigns.

There are free, paid monthly and pay as you go pricing plans. The free plan works for up to 1,000 contacts and 4,000 emails per month. Basic and Pro options start at $22 and $32/month for 1,000 contacts with unlimited emails, special templates, and more social account connectors, and range up to $250 and $363/month for 40,000 contacts.

VerticalResponse®

★★★★☆ (31)

3.8 out of 5

TOP RATED
EMAIL MARKETING SOFTWARE
SMALL BUSINESSES
trustradius™
2015

TOP RATED
EMAIL MARKETING SOFTWARE
MID-SIZE COMPANIES
trustradius™
2015

Summary of VerticalResponse Reviews

VERTICALRESPONSE PROS	VERTICALRESPONSE CONS
Template selection » Users liked the template selection; they would love to see more added.	**Email editor** » Users had issues with the WYSIWYG editor. » Some described the editing interface as clunky. » Editor produces occasional errors and/or code irregularities that require HTML troubleshooting or workarounds.
Ease of use » Most said it is extremely easy to use and quick to set up; requires minimal training.	**Customization** » Customizing templates, segments, and other features is generally difficult.
Salesforce integration » Users said the Salesforce integration works well for importing lists. » Some would like to see improvements to the Salesforce integration; Salesforce capabilities are more advanced than VerticalResponse.	**More integrations** » Users would like to see more integrations to 3rd party tools, including more social integrations.
Reporting » Users liked VerticalResponse reports. They said the delivery and engagement stats increased transparency and helped them with planning for future campaigns.	**List management and segmentation** » Users said VerticalResponse was not ideal for complex list management and segmentation needs.

VERTICALRESPONSE PROS	VERTICALRESPONSE CONS
Customer support » Support team is responsive when needed. » Some users explained that because the product is pretty basic, self-support is common.	
Cost-effective » Users said the price is right, especially for small operations. Many liked the free and pay-as-you-go email "credits" options. » Some said VerticalResponse was a step up from other bulk email tools like MailChimp and Constant Contact; others said that while it was once the "gold standard" for budget email marketing, other tools have since caught up. » Missing the bells and whistles of more sophisticated email marketing and marketing automation tools.	

Source: (20) User reviews of VerticalResponse on TrustRadius