Resize images for email

Advice on getting images to the correct size for an email

Have you ever seen an email where the image is too large and takes over the screen? That happens when the image is not properly resized before linking it to the email. How about an image that is so indistinct that you can't figure out what's in it? This note is going to help you avoid those situations.

First, some definitions may be helpful. Think of the screen as the piece of paper that the image will appear on when someone opens your email. Screen measurements are defined in pixels as are camera images, so you can use them as a handy unit of measure for determining the ideal size of your image in the email. Your typical email is around 800 pixels wide. Your typical photo from a new cellphone is 3264 pixels wide, which is wonderful for printing, not so helpful for emailing. (See this table for a comparison of image sizes http://www.bhphotovideo.com/FrameWork/charts/resolutionChartPopup.html)

Width of Email is 800 Pixels

Obviously, you're not going to be able to show a width of 3264 pixels in an email that is 800 pixels wide without shrinking the picture.

There are good ways to do this and not so good ways. While you can get your email editor in PowerBase to compress the picture and only show an image of, say, 600 pixels wide, if you don't reduce the picture pixel size beforehand, you cause yourself two problems. First, you're sending a whole lot of excess bytes to the email recipient. She won't be happy if she's reading it on her cell phone as it will take a long time to download. Secondly, you run the risk of embarrassing yourself if her email client doesn't compress it the way you intended. **Email client software is notoriously inconsistent when it comes to handling html layout and one of the ways that it manifests itself is in how it handles images.** Your email client may show your wonderfully designed email just right, but someone else's may screw it up.

Width of Photo is 3264 pixels wide

Cropping and Resizing

Here's what you do avoid the pitfalls and get your best image in front of your reader.

1) Crop it. Cropping means removing all the extraneous background or nonessential sections of your photo.

10/31/2012
Progressive Technology Project

Resize images for email

2) Resize it. After it's cropped, resize the image to fit inside your 800 pixel width. If your email has two columns, and you want the image to be in one of the columns, then you are looking at a 400 pixel width or smaller.

We haven't talked about the height of the image because most of the time, if you crop the image well and get the width right, the height will work out as well. There are times, though when you may have an image that is too tall for the space. In those cases, you have to crop it more, or reduce the width more, or get a new image. But whatever you do, make sure you reduce the size of the image proportionally so that it doesn't get distorted. Don't shoehorn the image into a space by squeezing one dimension. The result will be ugly.

Tools for Cropping and Resizing

You need an image editor. You have lots of choices. There are some built into your computer, you can get free open source ones, you can buy one or you can use an online one. **Whatever you chose, take the time to learn how to crop and resize. Ignore everything else it may do until you've mastered those two skills.**

There are numerous open source and free ones. GIMP (http://www.gimp.org/downloads/) works on both Mac and Windows. Photoshop is top notch, but expensive. In Mac and Windows operating systems, you have a basic one built in. Here's a tip on resizing with the venerable Windows Paint application: http://Windows.microsoft.com/en-US/Windows7/Resize-a-picture-using-Paint. You can go online and do it through your browser. Just search the internet for "online image editor" and you'll see multiple options.

I've got the image, now what?

After your image is the right size, save it on your machine in a place that you can find again. Give it a name that does not have embedded blanks. For example, "my picture" as a name has an embedded blank; however, "my_picture" does not.

Then go into PowerBase's email editor and select insert image. Select the option to upload the image to the server. You want all of your images that are used in PowerBase emails to be hosted on the PowerBase server. This applies to event registration and contribution pages as well.

When you insert the picture, be sure to set a margin of at least 5 pixels around it. These will prevent the text from running up next to your image. Also, give it an alluring and informational alternative text. Many people will never download your image, but they will see the text in some email editors. And folks that don't see images well or at all will be able to use their screen reader software to understand what the image is about. If you set the alignment to "right" or "left", browsers will wrap the text around it. You probably want that.

10/31/2012
Progressive Technology Project