

omnisend



5 Critical Questions to Ask When Choosing a New Email Provider

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Introduction

Email marketing is a foundational pillar of any retailers' ecommerce strategy, which makes choosing the right email service provider (ESP) a critical decision. To be successful they need their email provider to be commerce-focused, thoroughly understanding the modern-day customer journey. While there are some basic expectations of all email providers today, knowing which built-in tools to look for, how the cost of the platform will change as your business grows, and which features you're paying for is essential to choosing the right solution for your business.

Sifting through different providers and filtering out the jargon and buzzwords can be painstaking and confusing. This paper will explore the top questions and considerations you should be asking when switching email service providers, and how to choose the one that will help you build the best relationship with your customers—both now and in the future.

1. How Steep is the Learning Curve?

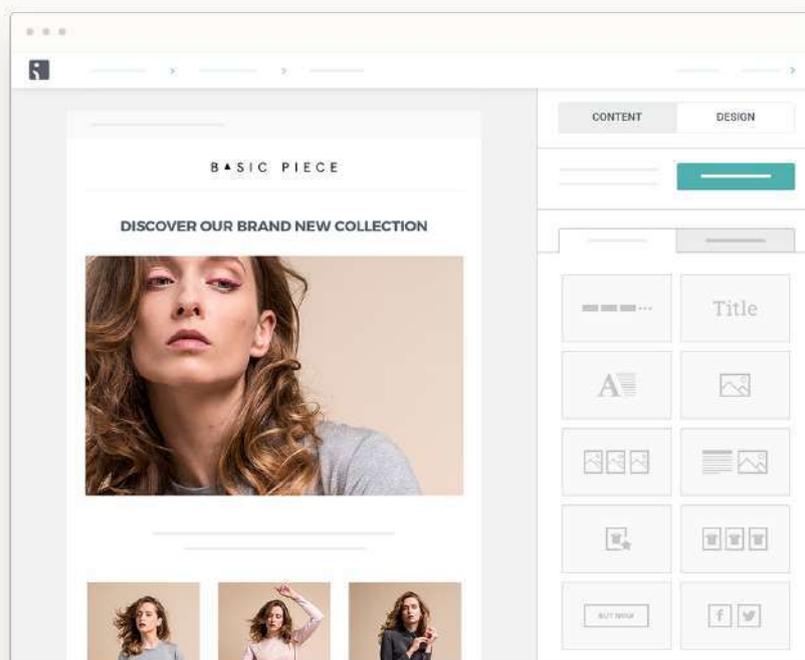
There's no way around it—changing an email provider comes with a learning curve. The quicker your marketing team can adapt to a new platform and keep your marketing campaigns at peak performance the better.

While it is expected that it will take some time to learn the ins-and-outs of more advanced functionality, being able to quickly integrate the foundational components of a new provider is critical in ensuring your customers never miss a beat.

When looking at the ability of your team to adopt a new tool consider the following questions:

Do they offer templates, and are they easily customizable? Just because you change email providers doesn't mean you need to spend twice as long to create emails. Beyond offering email templates, are they easy to use? Do they offer a drag-and-drop message editor and how easily can messages be customized, such as by inserting unique coupon codes, product recommendations, and even product details auto-populated right from your online store.

These are all questions you can address during a product demo.



Drag-and-drop email content editor

What's the ease and depth of segmentation? Segmentation is essential for today's marketers, but not all segmentation is created equal. Look at what you can segment on, how easy it is to create segments, and the ease of using them in both day-to-day email campaigns and automated workflows.

62.2%

Segmented campaigns in 2019 **earned 62.2% higher order rates** than non-segmented campaigns

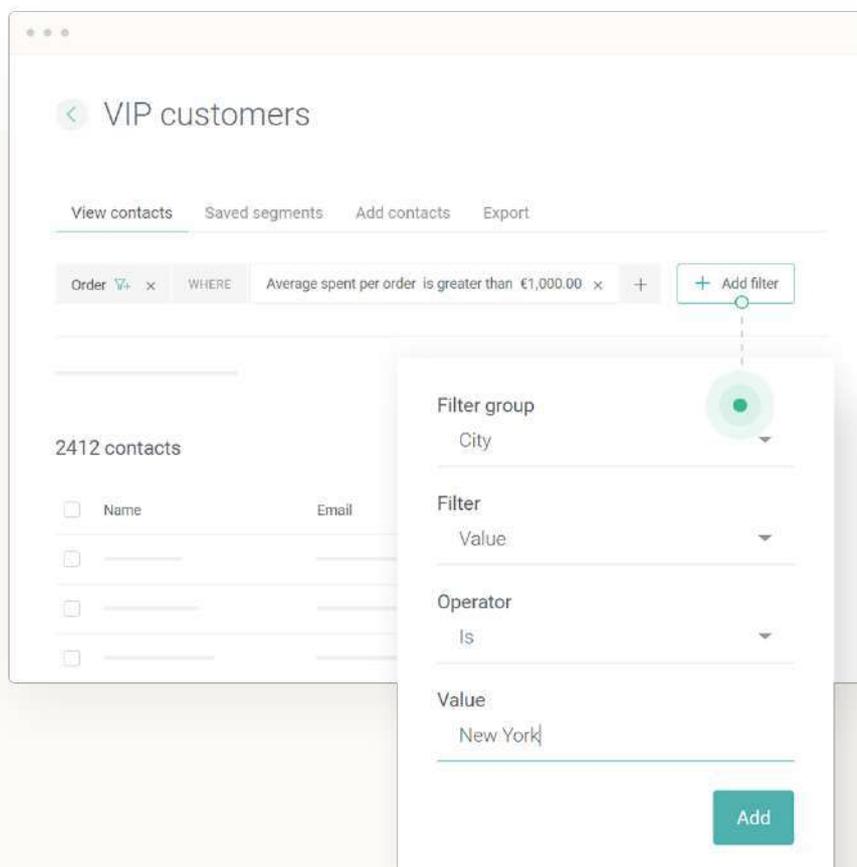
51.9%

Segmented campaigns in 2019 **earned 51.9% more click throughs** than non-segmented campaigns

110%

Segmented campaigns in 2019 **earned 110% more opens** than non-segmented campaigns

When it comes to what segmentation criteria to look for some items to consider are purchase data (e.g., RFM-related, categories, products), email behavior data (e.g., openers, non-openers), other field criteria (e.g., gender, birthday, country), and even SMS activity (e.g., sent, clicked). If you can't segment, you can't create relevant messages.



How easy is it to set up automation workflows?

Lifecycle marketing automation is the lifeblood of many email marketing programs, and you'll want to set them up quickly. Look to see how easy it is to create and customize workflows you may be currently sending, such as your welcome, cart abandonment, and order confirmation workflows, as well as who has access to creating and adjusting those. If the setup is difficult and the marketer can't manage it by themselves you'll forever be reliant on someone else to manage your business. This will prevent longer-term challenges as your business grows.



Recommended Reading:

- [Learn more about templates](#)
 - [Learn more about segmentation](#)
-



2. Will it Be Easy to Migrate/Integrate My Store?

When it comes to changing service providers of any kind, this is often the number one concern from IT departments. Companies today often have multiple tools running simultaneously which can create migration complexities. A long, complex migration costs time and revenue.

When thinking about changing your ESP, it's important to consider the following:

What is your store's ecommerce platform? Does your storefront have a built-in integration with the potential email provider? While it is not necessary, knowing one exists can expedite the migration process and set clear expectations about what data is passed back and forth. These built-in integrations also demonstrate the level of commitment between the email provider and ecommerce platform. If there is no built-in integration, don't worry. Just be sure to reference the API documentation to ensure your team can efficiently work with it.

Is there deliverability support and IP warming? Email deliverability is too important to ignore, and great email providers will have an IP warming plan customized for your store. This will help ensure your emails will be delivered reliably, and you'll rest easy knowing that your messages are getting in front of your customers' eyes.

Do they offer migration services? Finding a platform that is easy to self-migrate may be important for some businesses. But for others, finding one that can actively help you do it is necessary. Ask about available migration services, what's included, the expected completion time, and the cost of them. Some things to consider with the migration are list imports, the creation of segments, automated workflows, contact forms, and email templates.



Do they offer customer support? Does the company offer support such as live chat, or can you only submit help tickets? What hours is support available, do you have to pay extra for it, and do they offer a detailed self-service knowledge base? While you may not use it much, it's important to know it's live and waiting when you need it.



Recommended Reading:

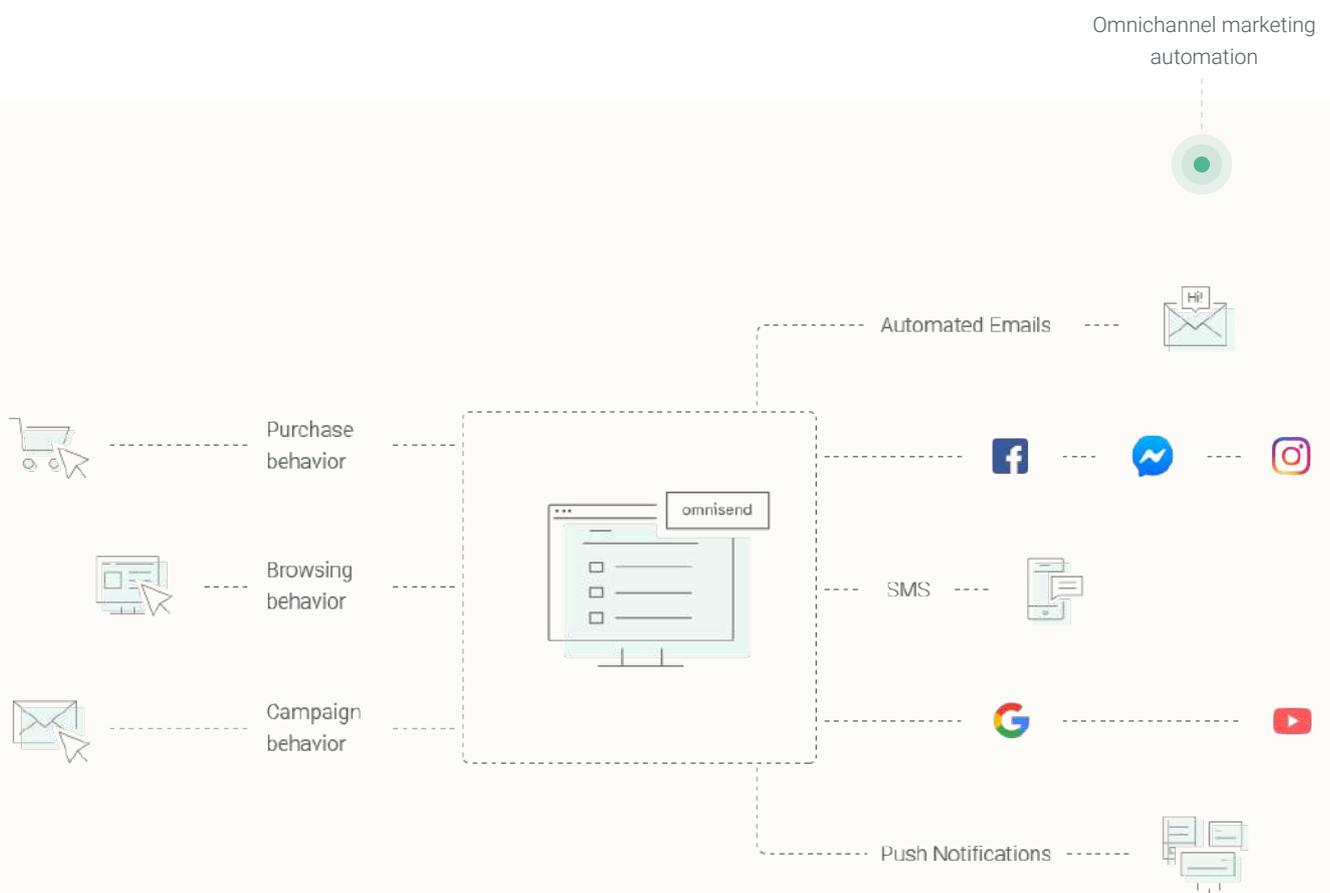
- [Learn more about integrations](#)
-



3. Do You Provide More Than Email?

This may sound unusual as you evaluate different email providers, but choosing a platform that has more to offer, and allows you to sustainably scale as you grow, has never been more important. Retailers today are often bogged down with separate pieces of software for every need—one for email popups, another for exit-intent technology, SMS marketing, product recommendations, and so on.

Whether you use different tools and channels right now, are considering them for the future, or don't plan on adopting some at all, it still matters that they're available. Knowing that your potential partner is actively planning for industry changes means you likely have less risk of the provider becoming obsolete as new technologies and channels arise.



Do they offer SMS and what's the cost? SMS is a rising channel for consumers. Not only do the majority of Gen Z plan on increasing or maintaining their email usage over the next several years, but text messaging is a natural communication tool for them—and one they are increasingly adopting from brands. Considering this generational cohort makes up a quarter of the population, it is too large of a group to ignore.

If an email provider does not offer SMS you may want to take serious consideration of the cost of adding it in the future—through yet another provider. For those forward-thinking providers that do offer it, explore not only the cost but also how it can be used.

Average SMS channel performance

Click through rate

14.2%

Average ROI

2755%



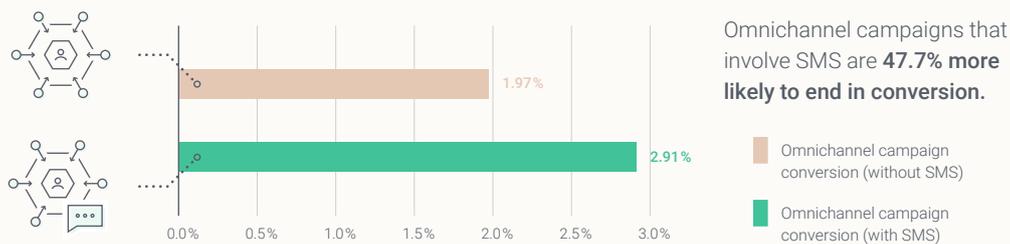
Omnisend Research Data 2019

Can the provider use SMS as both a stand-alone messaging tool as well as in conjunction with email automation? Does a contact **need** to have an email address or can they live as exclusive SMS contacts? What countries do they support sending to?

Calculate the cost of sending SMS messages. When doing your due diligence it is critical to think longer-term. Propose doubling or tripling your SMS database (or make up numbers) and see how the cost scales with the size of the list. Finally, ask whether the ESP offers any sort of built-in monthly/yearly credits when it comes to using SMS. SMS doesn't have to be expensive, even as you grow.

What other channels do they offer? While email and SMS are two of the more-known channels do they offer other channels such as Facebook Messenger and push notifications? Do they provide built-in retargeting options such as with Google Ads or the ability to create Facebook custom audiences? The more channels you can bring under one complete platform, the more the data will work together, and the less you'll have to manage.

Omnichannel and SMS



Can the provider replace other tools I'm using? Asking about other tools offered can help you eliminate some of your smaller third-party technology and help you consolidate your customer data—saving you time and money. Look for tools such as email capture and exit-intent pop-ups, SMS sending capabilities, landing page creators, and online retargeting abilities (e.g., pushing data to Google Ad platforms, Facebook, and Instagram).

Beyond asking for whether they are offered be sure to find out whether you have to pay extra for them. While many may offer them, oftentimes they nickel-and-dime you for using each individual tool. While paying for some services is expected, is the cost justified?



Recommended Reading:

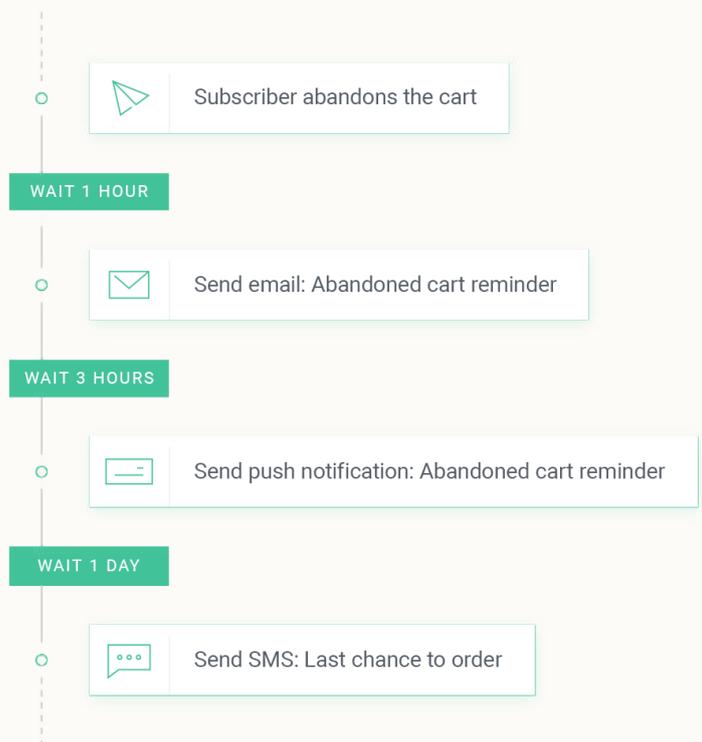
- [Learn more about marketing channels](#)
- [Learn more about forms and tools](#)

4. Do They Offer Customizable Automations?

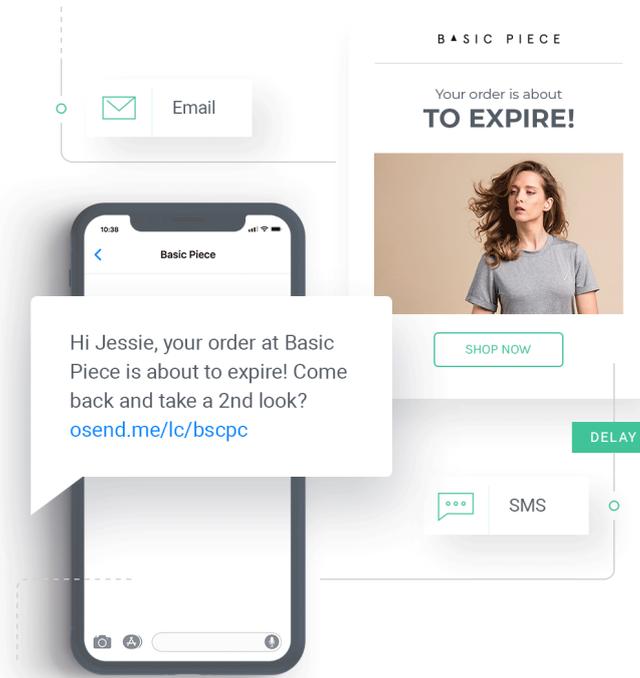
Marketing automation is the name of the game. Consumers today expect relevant, personalized messages via the channel of their choosing. Workflow flexibility allows you to create the automation sequences as unique as your customers, leading to more relevant messages that they'll better engage with. Lifecycle messages routinely outperform promotional campaigns in just about every metric and drives revenue in the background. When it comes to marketing automation be sure to ask the right questions.

Can I add multiple channels to the same workflow? Workflows for email are great, but can you seamlessly combine other channels, like SMS or push notifications, into a single automated sequence? Workflows involving three or more channels receive **287% higher purchase rates** than those using a single channel. Being able to utilize multiple channels to complement one another will help you scale your marketing sophistication as your customers demand.

Can I perform conditional splits within workflows? The reason you create an automation workflow is to reach a desired goal. What happens if a customer doesn't complete the goal you wanted, like responding to your emails or SMS messages? It's important to easily create multiple scenarios based on your customers' behavior, such as triggering a last-minute reminder email and SMS if the user doesn't open a triggered message.



Can you automate important lifecycle messages? Don't assume all companies can trigger the same messages. Ask about the ability to create your own lifecycle messages, such as cart, product and browse abandonment, welcome, post-purchase, lapsed-purchase, unengaged opener, birthday, and other date-based messages.



Can you segment within workflows to create multiple scenarios? Applying segmentation to your messages makes them more relevant. While it is easy to apply in promotional campaigns, can you also apply segmentation inside of your workflows to create relevant automated messages?

This is where having data and multiple tools under one platform allows you to supercharge your marketing. For instance, automatically adding tags to your contacts based on when, where, and how they signed up (using the native pop-up email tool) you can trigger automated campaigns based on these profile demographics, campaign engagement, and shopping behavior to create a tailored multi-channel welcome messaging experience.



Recommended Reading:

- [Learn more about marketing automation](#)
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5. What's the Cost—Both Now and Later?

Cost is probably one of the first things companies look at when choosing any new technology partner—but it shouldn't be the only thing. While we've already alluded to some of the associated costs there is so much more to consider when it comes to pricing. It's important to think about what you'll need—both now and later—when choosing a new provider. Be prepared to ask:

How will pricing change as I grow?

Maybe the most important question to consider is whether the pricing will scale with your business. Some platforms' pricing may look enticing at the moment, but as you grow and your needs increase the pricing becomes over-inflated. If you are not planning for future growth you'll likely find yourself once again searching for a new provider or, worse yet, stuck with an expensive system that is holding your business back.



Do I have to pay for it all? Many ESPs offer different plans, but with some, you have to pay for every feature—even if you don't use them. While most providers offer some features you won't use, it's important to recognize whether you are paying a premium for them. If certain features are pay-as-you-go, be sure to understand the cost of using them in the future. This will help you determine whether the ESP will cost-effectively scale with you.

Are there hidden costs and extra fees?

Be sure that the price you'll pay is actually the final price. For example, if you're looking to use extra channels, like SMS, there may be additional costs involved. Understand what those are, whether you get credits or discounts for using them, and how long they last for. Also, ask about whether there is a cost to make changes to things like automated workflows, templates, landing pages, or other assets.

What are my subscription options and do they affect the price? When it comes to subscriptions do they offer month-to-month, yearly contracts, or both? If they offer both, many will offer a discount for agreeing to a yearly contract, potentially saving you money. Also, if choosing an annual subscription make sure you fully understand what is included in that price. For providers that charge per feature, you may end up with surprise fees during times of high-growth.



Recommended Reading:

- [Learn more about Omnisend pricing](#)
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Conclusions

There are so many questions to ask when evaluating a new ESP: Are they commerce-focused? Can they help consolidate other tools and keep the data unified? Do they make omnichannel campaign creation easy and provide segmentation and re-targeting capabilities? Can we easily manage our own automated messages? Does the cost become unreasonably high as you scale?

Choosing the right email marketing provider for your business is far from a simple decision, but it doesn't have to be a scary one. Knowing the right questions to ask can help you side-step the hidden landmines, helping you identify the right long-term partner that will allow you to successfully grow your business.

Make Marketing Relevant with Omnisend

Omnisend is a robust all-in-one omnichannel marketing automation platform that empowers marketers to improve their ROI, increase their sales, and improve their customer relationships.

We help you stay connected to your customers, no matter what channel they use: email, SMS, Facebook Messenger, and many more.

With Omnisend's marketing automation, you can integrate several channels into the same workflow that will shave hours off your week and keep your customers on the hook.

High Growth Commerce Brands Choose Omnisend



With thousands of 5-star reviews on G2Crowd, Capterra, and GetApp, our **50,000 customers love us**, and we think you will too.

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