

HTML Emails in Outlook 2007

The recent launch of Microsoft Vista and the updated email programme Outlook 2007 has thrown up some serious challenges for web designers and email marketers. Why? Because the new version of Outlook no longer supports many of the features commonly found in HTML emails.

The previous version of Outlook (2003) used internet explorer to display HTML email messages. The new version uses Word for both the creation and display of email. What this means is that many features commonly found in HTML email messages are no longer supported (background images, Flash plug-ins etc).

What's more, Cascading Style Sheets are hardly supported. If using anything later than CSS level 1, Word 2007 may not render your style sheet accurately, giving a different version in Outlook 2007 than in Outlook 2003.

All of which represents an unwelcome challenge to designers and e-marketers faced with the prospect of re-coding their communications to accommodate Microsoft's new version of Outlook. Many are adopting a quick-fix solution by adding a simple prominent link to a web-based version of their email – neatly sidestepping the rendering issues thrown up by the new system. It's important to place the link at the top of the page just in case the rest of the message appears garbled on screen.

The only other option is to spend some time re-writing the HTML and testing across various email clients. Only by testing in Outlook 2007 can you be sure the changes you've made will be effective or whether more work is required.

