



1501 Stampede Ave.
Suite 3040
Cody, WY 82414
(307) 587-1338
www.ArialSoftware.com

Create Dynamic Message Content

By James Kinkade, Arial Software Technology Manager

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Introduction

When maintaining email lists containing thousands of subscribers, one tremendous challenge quickly arises: the ability to send consistently relevant email messages that appeal to everyone on the list.

An email message may appeal to one group in the list, but cause another to decide to unsubscribe. Personalizing your email campaign using an existing customer database is one action that can quickly mitigate the rate of list attrition due to irrelevance of message.

Subscribers have been documented as being much more responsive to messages that reference information previously provided to the message sender. Research has shown that presenting web users a product that they've previously considered increases immediate purchases by 60% and deferred purchases by 58%. (*Jupiter Research, 2006*)

Dynamic message content is the one way to create personalized email messages beyond the "Hello {firstname}" format. Used correctly, it can create messages that appeal to large groups within a mass email marketing campaign. This involves culling existing information and creating messages based on behaviors already known about the customer. Creating such highly personalized messages also involves use of a quality installed email tool like Campaign Enterprise.

Two dynamically personalized messages

Here are two HTML email messages with dynamic content. Notice the differences between the two. They appear to have been sent by a separate email campaign, but that is not the case. These messages were sent in the same mass emailing.

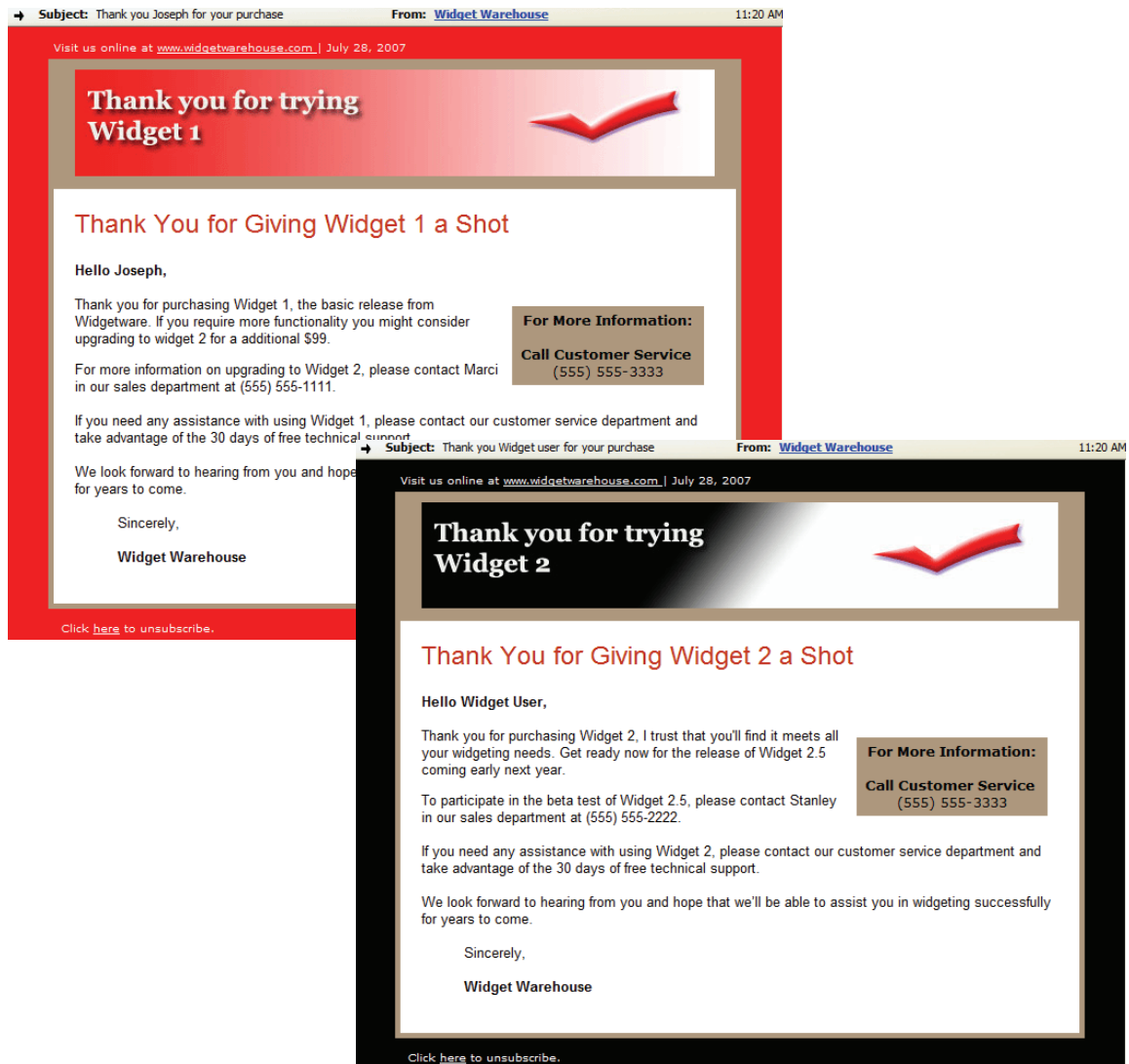
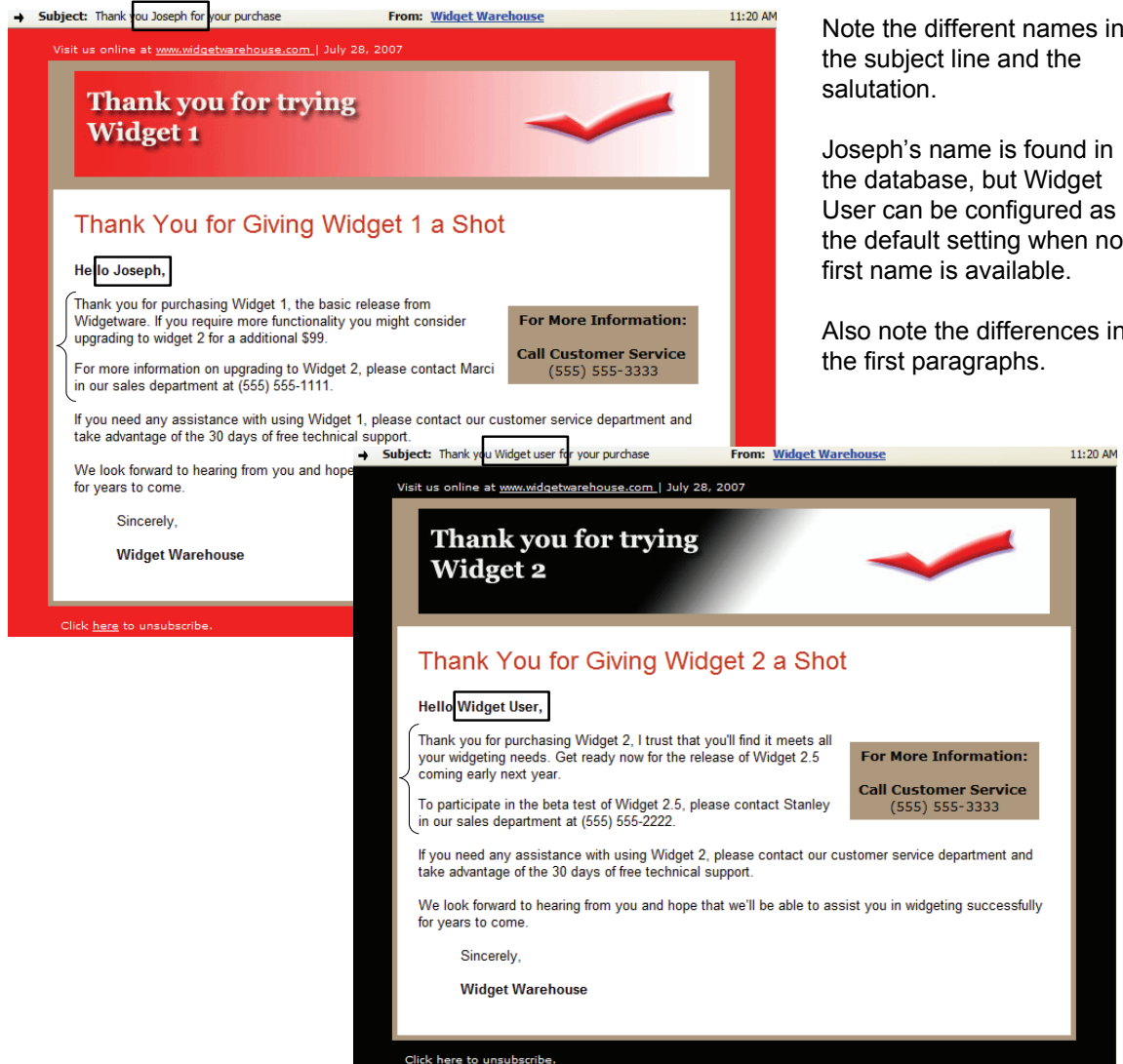


Figure 1. Two samples of HTML email messages which have been created using dynamic content.

Comparisons of the two messages

Besides the obvious differences in background color and header images, there are differences in the subject line, the text itself and other key features. All the customer data necessary to create these different messages are stored in the database, or on files accessible to Campaign Enterprise or other quality HTML email programs, and pulled by the email program dynamically.



The image displays two screenshots of HTML email messages side-by-side for comparison. Both messages are from 'Widget Warehouse' and dated July 28, 2007. The top message has a red background and is addressed to 'Joseph'. The bottom message has a black background and is addressed to 'Widget User'. Both messages include a 'Thank you for trying' header, a main title, a salutation, a body of text, a 'For More Information' box with a 'Call Customer Service' button, and a signature block. The subject lines and salutations are highlighted with boxes to show differences.

Message 1 (Top):

Subject: Thank you Joseph for your purchase
From: Widget Warehouse
11:20 AM

Visit us online at www.widgetwarehouse.com | July 28, 2007

Thank you for trying Widget 1

Thank You for Giving Widget 1 a Shot

Hello Joseph,

Thank you for purchasing Widget 1, the basic release from Widgetware. If you require more functionality you might consider upgrading to widget 2 for an additional \$99.

For more information on upgrading to Widget 2, please contact Marci in our sales department at (555) 555-1111.

If you need any assistance with using Widget 1, please contact our customer service department and take advantage of the 30 days of free technical support.

We look forward to hearing from you and hope for years to come.

Sincerely,
Widget Warehouse

Click [here](#) to unsubscribe.

Message 2 (Bottom):

Subject: Thank you Widget user for your purchase
From: Widget Warehouse
11:20 AM

Visit us online at www.widgetwarehouse.com | July 28, 2007

Thank you for trying Widget 2

Thank You for Giving Widget 2 a Shot

Hello Widget User,

Thank you for purchasing Widget 2, I trust that you'll find it meets all your widgeting needs. Get ready now for the release of Widget 2.5 coming early next year.

To participate in the beta test of Widget 2.5, please contact Stanley in our sales department at (555) 555-2222.

If you need any assistance with using Widget 2, please contact our customer service department and take advantage of the 30 days of free technical support.

We look forward to hearing from you and hope that we'll be able to assist you in widgeting successfully for years to come.

Sincerely,
Widget Warehouse

Click [here](#) to unsubscribe.

Note the different names in the subject line and the salutation.

Joseph's name is found in the database, but Widget User can be configured as the default setting when no first name is available.

Also note the differences in the first paragraphs.

Figure 2. Comparing differences between two dynamically created HTML email messages.



How dynamic content works

In the email message where the dynamic customizations are to occur, a merge field is used. This merge field points to a column in the database with the corresponding data (usually this is data collected about the customer during the subscription process, website visit or online purchase). The more information known about the customer's viewing and shopping habits, the more customized the bulk email message can become.

For example:

Hello {FirstName,Widget User},

Is replaced with either, "Hello Joseph," or "Hello Widget User," depending on whether or not the FirstName field in the database is populated or not.

The background color and the header image are also stored in the database and pulled into the message using the merge field technology.

Other options for creating dynamic content on the fly involve using Immediate IIF statements or CASE statements in the message body.

IIF Statements

In some cases, it may not be feasible to pull data from the same field for different records. Immediate IIF statements can help.

For example:

{iif((ProductID=22),"{FIELD1}","{FIELD2}")}

In this example when the condition is met, the information in the database is displayed. The value of the ProductID will determine if FIELD1 and FIELD2 will be included in the message. If the value is not met, those fields are ignored.

Completely separate messages that are prepared ahead of time are also possible, depending on the value of the ProductID field.

{iif((ProductID=22),"{FILE:C:\TRUETEXTFILE.TXT}","{FILE:C:\FALSETEXTFILE.TXT}")}

When the condition is met, the true text file message is loaded in the message body. If not, the false text file message is loaded, which can be completely different.

CASE Statements

To add more dynamic content to the message body, case statements can be used.

For example:

{CASE WHEN OrgType=1 THEN "{Field1}" WHEN OrgType=2 THEN "{Field2}" ELSE THEN "{Field3}" END}



When the condition OrgType is met, then Field 1 is merged into the message, if it equals 2, then a separate field is merged. If no conditions are met, a default field can be merged into the message. The text can also be directly entered in place of merge fields too, pulled from a file, or a combination of all options.

For example:

```
{CASE WHEN OrgType=1 THEN "{FILE:C:\messagefolder\lorgtype1textfile.txt}" WHEN  
OrgType=2 THEN "{Field2}" ELSE THEN "sorry, you don't qualify for the discount." END}
```

In this case when the OrgType condition is 1, text is merged from a file stored at the specified location. If it is 2, then a field is merged from the database, if the condition is not met, the default text is entered right in the case statement.

Summary

The simplest form of message personalization, inserting a person's name into an email, can increase open rates by as much as 10% (Jupiter Research, 2006). Personalizing messages even further using customer data is a valuable tool and can increase open rates even more. The more data that is noted on each customer, the greater the flexibility in creating dynamic and unique email messages for all segments of your list.

Campaign Enterprise from Arial Software offers all of these dynamic content functions to meet any of your message personalization needs. Contact Arial Software today to find out how to get started at (307) 587-1338 or visit the website at www.ArialSoftware.com.

About Arial Software

Founded in 1993, Arial Software is widely considered the industry leader in comprehensive software designed exclusively for relationship marketing through personalized email messaging. Arial's mission is to be a universal provider of software tools to automate, personalize and measure meaningful email communications.

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