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MARKETING MICHELLE GAMBLE

Tips for effective email marketing

GIVEN THAT PEOPLE these days tend to spend more time in front of their computers than any other screen, email marketing definitely needs to be a part of your marketing arsenal. Not only does it effectively reach people interested in your product or service but it's cheaper, greener, quicker to implement and more flexible than any other form of direct marketing.

Here are my top tips for designing an effective email marketing program so you can win the battle for extra customers, bigger spends and more repeat business:

Have a goal

A lot of email marketing fails because it's done without a clear objective. The key thing to decide before you undertake email marketing is whether you are doing it to acquire customers or retain them. Acquisition emails are "email campaigns". Retention emails are "email newsletters".

The goal of an acquisition email (email campaign) is to get the customer to take action (buy a product, visit a store, enter a competition etc). A retention email (email newsletter) is designed to develop a relationship over a longer period of time to drive loyalty, repeat purchase, referrals or a sale in the long-term.

An email campaign has a strong call to action and offers. An email newsletter has interesting information or subject matter that adds value to the reader but no hard sell.

I suggest if you want to do both – do it in separate emails so you can maximise your opportunity to achieve your goal.

Have a good list

One of my pet hates is when I meet someone at an event or meeting, I give them my business card and the next thing I know I'm getting their newsletter or email campaigns. I've not asked to receive it nor am I interested in what they have to say.

Only send your emails to people who've asked to receive it and have an unsubscribe link on all your emails. Have a double-opt in process for anyone who subscribes so that they confirm that they want to get your email. It means a smaller list but at least you're sending to an audience who's interested.

Build your list by making sure you include a "subscribe box" prominently on your website, preferably in the main navigation (like your page header). Take advantage of inviting people to subscribe at as many other touch-points as possible. Eg Point of sale, Events etc. Make sure you give people an accurate description of the benefits of subscribing and always deliver on your initial promise in the type of content and frequency of emails.

Stay out of the junk box

Place an "add me to your address book" button to the page where your subscribers sign up so that your email ends up in their inbox, not their spam filter. Offer subscribers the option of receiving the email via a html OR text – some html emails are blocked by certain servers.

Get your email opened

The way to get your email opened is to make sure that the receiver recognises the sender so think about who it will be from, whether it's the company name or a person's name. Ideally personalise the subject line also, and test different subject lines. Make it a "must open"!

Get your email read

The first few paragraphs of the email are the most important. This should be focused on telling people what the offer is or what's in the newsletter and enticing them to read more. Keep the copy succinct and use simple language. The general rule of thumb is the shorter the copy the better.

Keep the full story on your website and link to it from the newsletter – this will help

drive traffic back into your site as well. Pepper your email with relevant email contact details, bold copy and links. All of this helps capture the reader's attention, allows them to read your email quickly and motivates them to take action. If writing isn't your skill – get a copywriter to help.

Have a strong call to action

At the end of the newsletter work on driving people to take some action (even if it's just to forward the newsletter on to a friend). This is particularly important if it's an email campaign vs an email newsletter.

Test and tweak

Split your list up and test different subject lines, content, offers and see what works best. That way you can maximise your effectiveness.

Send your emails out early in the week. The highest email open rates occur on a Monday with the lowest on a Friday.

There are some great tools on the web now that have made it even easier to do email marketing. My favourites are:

www.toddle.com – Free newsletter creation service

www.mailchimp.com – Web based email creation, delivery and reporting tool

www.beautiful-email-newsletters.com – Great for inspiration on newsletter design

www.marketingprofs.com/cmp/16/ste cpvt/?adref=betpmuecp – An Email Campaign planning tool by the very talented folks at Marketing Profs

www.greatsummary.com – If you need someone to help edit your copy to make it short and sweet this is a very clever little tool to help. ●

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