

Email Success

Top 10 Steps to Email Marketing Success

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1 **Set Marketing Objectives**

What are you trying to accomplish with your email marketing campaign? Are you trying to drive more traffic to your web site, or are you recommending a specific product? Or are you building your brand by providing relevant news and information to your subscribers? Your marketing objectives should drive the content and creative elements of your campaign, as well as set expectations for how you will measure success. If you are recommending a specific product, success is usually measured by how many people purchased the product. If you are trying to create new sales leads, a campaign is successful when your sales funnel is filled with new prospects. Content-based newsletters are more intangible, but success can still be measured by focusing on the number of new subscribers.

2 **Develop a Privacy Policy**

On the Internet, customers are in control of the relationship and want to know what will happen to the information they provide to you. Even though the majority of your customers will never read your privacy policy, the Internet acts as an amplifier - it's the very vocal 1% who will compare how their information is collected, used and shared to your

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published privacy policy. Say what you're going to do and do what you say - going through the process will help you establish policy and will drive decisions within your organization. And you'll show your customers you are a responsible member of the business community.

3 Collect Opt-In Names

Just because you have someone's email address doesn't mean that you have permission to contact him or her via email. Unlike the offline world where telemarketers call during dinner time and direct marketers send unsolicited information via postal mail, on the Internet different rules apply. Internet best practices (and in many cases state laws) require you to allow users to select "yes" or "no" before you contact them by email.

Why bother with opt-in procedures? Email is the best, most cost-effective way to direct users back to your web site and tell them about new products and services. Consumers are savvy, and if they don't see strong opt-in procedures, many will falsify their email address - leaving you without a way to contact them again in the future.

4 Develop a Message

According to Seth Godin, author of Permission Marketing, successful communications should be relevant, anticipated and personal. Relevant - if you're the phone company, messages about food safety are probably not relevant to your telephone customers; a new service that automatically tells telemarketers to go away, however, is relevant to this target audience. Anticipated - the most effective messages are ones that are expected and desired by the recipient. Recipients are likely to ignore (or delete without opening) email messages that aren't anticipated - your opt-in process helps users self-select the messages they want to receive. Personalized - if you collect recipient's names, then by all means address your subscribers by name. And if you collect additional demographic or product-specific information, further personalize your email messages with "conditional content" - a recipient in New York, for example, should receive information personalized for their region. Choosing the right technology partner can make this very easy to do.

5 FROM, TO & Subject Lines

You live and die by the FROM, TO and Subject lines of your message. This is your first point of contact, and you must inspire your recipients to open your email message. The FROM line should be instantly recognizable and is commonly the name of your company. The TO line should be the recipient's first and last name - addressing people by their name immediately grabs their attention and makes your message appear important. If you only have the recipient's email address, use this instead, but a blank or generic TO line should be avoided at all costs. The Subject line is the most

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important of the three and should both convey what is contained inside the body of the message as well as compel the recipient to open it. Four to six words powerful words are optimal. To avoid appearing like unsolicited email, do not use ALL CAPS, exclamation marks or the word "free" (unless you are offering free shipping).

6 Test Your Message

One of the benefits of email is the ability to rapidly test and measure results before an entire email campaign is launched. It's best to test different copy and even different colors with statistically significant samples from your list. Experienced email marketers know that the most effective message isn't always the one favored by the marketing department. A test with three or four different messages (including different subject lines) can be sent out several days before the full campaign and allows you to choose the message with the best response rate. You should also test your messages for compatibility with different email clients, such as AOL, Outlook or Hotmail, and make sure the graphics and text display properly.

7 Three... Two... One... Launch!

The pre-launch checklist: Make sure that your web site is ready to handle a spike in the number of visitors. Tell your web developers and system administrators when the campaign will launch (including when test messages will be sent), how many email message will be sent, and an approximate response rate. Supply a list of links that will be included in the email message and make sure that the pages will be available when the campaign launches. Alert your customer service representatives and provide them with anticipated responses to customer inquiries. Once your web site is ready and you've analyzed the test message results and selected the message that performs best, it's time to launch the campaign.

8 Unsubscribes & Undeliverables

With every outbound communication, you should provide users a way to unsubscribe (or opt-out) from your mailing list. This industry best practice is increasingly mandated by legislation and government regulation. Typical ways for users to unsubscribe include clicking on a special link, hitting 'reply', sending an email to a specific address, or allowing the user to opt-in or opt-out of specific types of email messages at a profile management page. A profile management page is often the best way, because the user can tailor their preferences without completely opting-out of all communications with your company. Watch your unsubscribe rate carefully - if a high percentage of users unsubscribe after a specific email message, carefully analyze the email campaign to make sure that the message is relevant, anticipated and personalized and not antagonistic.

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You should also track undeliverable or "bounced" email addresses. If your system allows, prompt users that return to your web site that you've been trying to contact them (with their opt-in permission), but their email address has either changed or is somehow invalid. This can help you re-establish contact with these "lost" customers.

9 Track Campaign Results

Campaigns are measured by how many email messages were sent, how many were opened, and how many recipients clicked through on the links within your message. Most email delivery systems track clickthroughs on an aggregate level while more sophisticated systems can keep track of each individual user's response. An email message that had a high open rate but a low clickthrough rate may mean that your message did not contain a strong call to action.

A message with a high clickthrough rate may mean that your message was so interesting that your recipients wanted to find out additional information posted on your web site. Some integrated email delivery systems can also track whether a purchase was made as a direct result of your email campaign. When you later compare how much this set of customers spent with your company (i.e. \$30,000) vs. how much you spent developing the content for your email campaign (i.e. \$1,200), you can more easily justify your marketing expenditures.

10 Send Additional Messages Based on Campaign Results

Once you've analyzed the results of your campaign, use the knowledge gained to tailor the content of your next email campaign. If you are able to track results on an individual basis, you may wish to automatically send follow-up messages to recipients who clicked through a specific link. For example, you may wish to send a follow up email message to the 34% of your recipients who clicked on the "mountain biking weekend getaway trip" link within your last email message. Such an automated follow-up email message might review the best type of clothing to wear for such a trip, with links to purchase the items. Or if someone clicked through a link to download a "Top Ten" list from an email campaign, you might send an email message a few days later to ask if the recipient has any additional questions.

About Persona, Inc. Persona's p-CRM system provides a plug and play Internet marketing solution that allows you to collect data from your web site visitors, analyze the data for insightful business intelligence, and then market to your visitors with personalized email communications. Based on the latest Internet privacy regulations and industry best practices, the p-CRM system engages your customers in managing the data they have provided you, which allows you to build stronger customer relationships and market with more accurate data. For more information, please contact sales@persona.com, or call 303.410.4600.