

## **Using E-Mail for Effective Marketing**

E-mail marketing can be an inexpensive and targeted channel for dissemination of information about your company and its products. Still, as with any aspect of your marketing campaign, if it is not executed properly it can inadvertently create a negative customer experience. E-mail marketing certainly runs some risks, as sales pitches through the email are often seen as a nuisance at best and an intrusion at worst.

Many companies now use the e-mail as a way to maintain a relationship with their customers. This can be highly effective, as it allows the customer to participate in the brand, working toward building a relationship of trust and loyalty.

E-mail can also be an effective tool for driving sales as it can serve as a channel for the distribution of promotional materials and special discount offers. For some products, e-mail also offers a direct sales channel, as links can be provided to customers to enter a website and make an immediate, perhaps impulsive, purchase.

Effective e-mail campaigns have three crucial elements; the mailing list, the content of the e-mail and the follow-up.

### **The Mailing List**

Building an e-mail marketing campaign begins with selection of your mailing list. There are an abundance of lists available, some permission lists and some simply listings of email addresses gathered from industry sources. Tudog strongly urges the use of permission lists only. Sending uninvited e-mail is most likely an unwanted invasion of the recipient's e-mail box and is often seen as a less-than-legitimate business practice. This generates a bad feeling toward the company that will be almost impossible to overcome. Ironically, an e-mail meant to generate a sales lead, had the reverse effect and alienated a potential customer.

The most effective way to build an e-mail mailing list is to offer people the opportunity to sign up for your mailings through you website or through an initial mailing. This gives people the feeling they are being offered an opportunity to participate in the information or offers you are distributing, and will make them receptive and cooperative when your mail arrives.

### **E-mail Content**

The e-mail you send is of little value if it is not being read. The challenge to overcome with e-mail marketing is that most people receive numerous e-mails daily and need to select which ones will be awarded their limited, precious time. Similarly, e-mail is often accessed at numerous times during the day, meaning that the relevancy of your e-mail may not mesh well with the task the reader is currently absorbed in. Some helpful hints to crafting compelling and enticing e-mail are:

- Introduce Yourself Right Away - You'll lose credibility if you try to disguise your e-mail as anything other than it is - a business motivated correspondence. Also, people read the first few lines of an e-mail and then decide if they want to read the rest. So, start your letter with who you are and why you have an offer they

can't refuse. If you don't get your offer out there right away, it may never reach its intended audience.

- Use the Subject Line - You can increase the number of people opening your e-mail if you use the subject line to describe your purpose. If people have requested your e-mail or given you permission to contact them, then your company name or product name creates an association. If the e-mail is routinely sent, such as a newsletter, the name of the newsletter would similarly gain acknowledgement and recognition. Don't try to use hyped up sales language in the subject line. It raises suspicion and dooms the email for the deleted items box.
- Keep it Simple - Don't be tempted to make your e-mail too fancy. Remember, people have to download your message, and if it takes too long you'll be addressing a customer already annoyed with you. Also, e-mail does not necessarily lend itself to the types of design elements we may incorporate into print pieces. Keep your e-mails simple and compelling.
- Create Urgency - If you use e-mail too often your letters will turn into nothing more than an electronic version of the junk mail most of us automatically place directly in the trash bin. Use e-mail only when you are announcing something deemed worthy or making a special offer. These serve to create a sense of urgency with your customers, particularly if your special offer is for a limited time only.
- Be Truthful - If you try to mislead people with vague language or draw them into your website and then switch your offer on them, prepare for the worst. E-mail is extremely viral, and any games you play will come back to haunt you. So be truthful. Give all the information your customers need in the body of the e-mail - including product information, price and any add on fees. Then direct the buyer to the exact page on your website where the offer is located.
- Don't Send Mistakes - The e-mail you send becomes a reflection of your company. Make mistakes in spelling or omit something you claim is there and people will start wondering whether you are clumsy and inefficient in all aspects of your operation. Make sure you proofread all e-mails before they go out.
- Put Contact Information - Your e-mail should have a direct link not only to your website, but to the exact web page that corresponds to your message or offer. Do not assume that the link is enough by way of contact information, or that people can collect that information from your website. Provide all your contact information in the e-mail too. That includes a toll free telephone number, an address and an e-mail address, and a contact person, in case they have inquiries.

## **Follow-up**

An effective e-mail campaign can generate response rates that meet or exceed those of direct mail and tele-marketing campaigns. The tactics used for follow-up and to close the deal can assist in converting inquiries driven by the e-mail campaign into hard sales.

Tudog believes that effective marketing via e-mail is achieved through a commitment to the channel and a consistency in its use. This can mean that some e-mail campaigns are followed-up with more e-mail. Still, e-mail, for all its conveniences, is impersonal and one sided. For these reasons, Tudog generally recommends following-up e-mail campaigns with telephone calls. We have found that the calls add credibility to the e-mail and bring an element of person-to-person contact that is critical for a sale to be closed.

E-mail marketing can be an effective and inexpensive supplement to your broader and more direct marketing tactics. The use of e-mail can keep you in front of customers and serve to maintain a dialogue. Just make sure that the exchanges are positive, support your objectives and are consistent with you overall marketing strategy.