

## E-mail based Marketing Campaigns

Today's world has been besieged by an electronic communication revolution that is making its presence felt in every sphere of life. The Internet has now practically become a way of life or rather a parallel world where almost all the activities of the real world can be duplicated. With it having grown at such an alarming pace, it was but certain that conducting business on the Internet would take off in a big way. And hence came about the birth of e-business or e-commerce. This technological advancement was able to entrench deeply into the fabric of modern day life because it dealt with communication that is vital to everything in this world.

One of the strengths of the electronic communication media is that it costs virtually nothing to send a message. Electronic messaging is cheap, fast and is also easy to automate. According to Forrester\*, it costs \$0.05 for every e-mail sent, while it costs \$1 per customer to send out a catalogue. Also, e-mail is more personal than direct mail. All these features have made it one of the most preferred mediums for marketing products and services. E-mail marketing in its purest form is all about interaction, speed, and communication. It has proved to be an effective integrated marketing tool and is justified in its recognition as the Internet's "killer application" The concept of e-mail lists and promotional mailers is changing the way marketing is done all over the world.

As with any communicating medium, there are certain Do's and Don'ts that have to be followed for implementing a successful e-mail marketing campaign.

### Thumb rules for creating successful E-mail Marketing Campaigns

- A successful e-mail campaign will always create a call to action. So give your customers a reason to participate if you don't want your marketing efforts to go down the drain
- Basic netiquette practices should be followed in all e-mail marketing campaigns
- It should never be forgotten that the overall objective of your e-mail messages is to build and upkeep a professional image of your business in addition to promoting the business
- A golden rule when it comes to e-mail marketing is that 'anything that does not help you will definitely hurt you.'
- Another important decision you have to take is whether you want your e-mail campaign in text or HTML format. It is actually better to offer your customers an option of both, to satisfy all their needs
- Your e-mail marketing mailers can also include rich media files like audio, video or animation features. Such files add an element of interactivity to the relationship between the advertisers and the audience and serve to increase their ability to extend the message. However, rich media files take longer to download and may cause many people to trash the mailers without even opening them. So, one should be careful while using animation, video etc. in the mailers and provide a link to the rich media files instead of embedding them directly in the mail to reduce its size

### Pointers to writing effective E-mail Marketing Mailers

1. **Good presentation is the key** – E-mails should never have poor grammar, misspelled words or unfinished sentences. Supplying proper background information along with your company name and contact information goes a long way in adding to the credibility of the mail. Also the CAN – SPAM Act requires all commercial e-mail to have a company name, street address and a way to opt out
2. **Use politeness as your guide** – Always write positive weighted e-mails no matter how your day is affecting your mood
3. **Think ahead about the consequences of your message** – Don't put yourself in a position susceptible to embarrassment just because you thought it was sent in confidence. A transaction that does not benefit all whom it affects is not worth the effort

4. **Keep the messages short** – As people are bombarded with messages, present your point quickly to have a better chance of it being read
5. **Never type in all capital letters** – This is considered equivalent to shouting in the text driven field of the Internet
6. **Avoid using emotions** – Using things like emotions comes across as extremely unprofessional and inappropriate. It is always better to focus on the message and say what you mean in words
7. **Avoid using common Internet savvy acronyms** – Using Internet savvy acronyms will only add to the confusion the customers
8. **Maintain a balance in spacing of the lines and their length** – It is hard to read text with unbalanced spacing and alignment. So care should be taken to maintain proper alignment and spacing
9. **Write effective subject lines** – The four elements of effective subject lines are:
  - You need to consider legitimacy in order to build trust while sending e-mails
  - Erase any confusion in your reader's minds by emphasizing the benefits to your recipient. The subject line should state a clear offer, reward or benefit
  - Be straight forward and specific in your message
  - Use basic fundamentals – use correct grammar, speak in second person, avoid using all caps or multiple exclamations and leave out the period in case the sentence is incomplete
10. **Include a Signature File** – A signature file is the best opportunity to list who you are, what you do and how you can be contacted. It reinforces your brand and corporate image along with offering a level of consistency that helps streamline all your brand communications

### Looking ahead

After you followed all the basics right and created an e-mail marketing campaign, it is time to move on and plan, in order to manage the expected response to the campaign. For that you will have to:

- **Create and post a FAQ page**  
Through this page you can answer all the anticipated questions about your products and mailers. This helps in handling an onslaught of response questions
- **Contact information should be easily accessible**  
Making available all the contact information and e-mail addresses of everyone in the organization, lets you and your targeted customer save time
- **Place a text e-mail link on every web page**  
The visitors can contact you directly if you provide a mailto: link on your web pages
- **Follow the 24 hour rule**  
Try and reply to all e-mail within 24 hours. If it becomes difficult to handle the volume of responses, you can try initiating an e-mail auto-responder to handle certain types of inquiries. The e-mail it sends will be slightly general and impersonal but will atleast assure the customers that you are looking into their queries. But ultimately, your customers will need more attention if they are going to do more business with you
- **Follow up**  
One of the best ways to cement a business relationship with your customers is by sending prompt thank you letters or additional information to customers who have either purchased something or have requested information

### Sending the E-mails on their way

The most preferred way of sending out e-mail marketing mailers is through e-mail mailing lists. A **mailing list** is of a collection of mailing addresses that lets you send a message to all the addresses in it, by just mailing your message once to a single mailing list address. Every constituent of the list receives personalized mailers addressing them directly. These e-mail lists are only as strong as the number and quality of its subscribers. Hence, it is imperative to build a comprehensive mailing list before you get to the task of finally dispatching the mailers.

### **Tips to be followed while using Mailing Lists to send out Marketing E-mails:**

- Test your list properly by sending out the mail to yourself first. This helps you check whether the final mailer that is delivered to the customer's id is what it was really supposed to be
- Embed a link on your website that will make it highly accessible for people to add to your list
- Whenever possible, get the e-mail addresses of your customers when they purchase products, services or need customer service
- You can try and promote your lists through offline marketing techniques (E.g. direct mail, brochures, etc)
- Manage the focus of your list so that your company can remain in control and make adjustments when needed

Most of the times, a list server is the software program that is used to send e-mail for mailing list applications. The most popular list server is called LISTSERV but lots of other new programs are entering the fray now with improved and better features. One such list mailing application that is fast gaining popularity is **www.EZlistmailer.com**. This website offers comprehensive solutions for all your list mailing needs. A recent up-gradation of the site's features has made it completely user friendly where in you can create and dispatch a complete e-mail campaign within minutes. It offers you unmatched features like its own HTML template builder with 'What You See Is What You Get' (WYSIWYG) tool, options for importing e-mail addresses from other applications, managing unlimited subscriber lists, tracking user responses and even getting monthly activity reports. You can create your e-mail marketing campaign by following its simple step-by-step wizard and watch your audience respond to it in real time. You can keep track of how many customers are opening your mails, how many times and which parts of the mail they are reading. This mailing application also offers customers 3 different package options to suit all kinds of requirements along with a customized package for special needs.

### **Benefits of E-mail Lists**

E-mail list mailers are vital to accomplishing your marketing goals because

1. They are highly targeted
2. They are delivered directly to the customer
3. They build continuity among the members of the list
4. They build your brand and project you as an expert in your field

### **Possible Glitches**

While engaging in e-mail marketing, there is every possibility that your campaign be labeled as Bulk E-mail or as a Spam Mail. Unsolicited commercial e-mail is known as Spam Mail. This practice started out in the early stages of Internet and e-mail when businesses used to send out unsolicited e-mail to unsuspecting individuals whose contact information was culled from Internet newsgroups and websites. The result is a huge flow of spam and junk e-mail in the inboxes of people. This led to the loss of credibility of legitimate e-mail. To combat this menace, the Can Spam Act of 2004 was passed which provides guidelines that have to be followed to prevent your e-mail marketing mailers from being classified as Spam mail. Criminal penalties including a jail term are provided in this act for violations.

In order to escape the Spam net, you should take precautions like

- Do not send e-mail to lists that have not opted in to receive your e-mail
- Do not purchase lists from brokers that transfer the actual list to you
- Always put your street address in your commercial e-mails
- Provide opt out instructions in your commercial e-mails
- Remove people who want to opt out as soon as they let you know
- Never use misleading headlines or subject lines in your commercial e-mail
- Provide a working contact e-mail address in your commercial e-mail
- Avoid attachments in your commercial e-mails (some spam filters will strip or reject them)
- Keep current on the laws in your country on e-mail
- Refrain from sending offensive, falsely advertised and unethical messages or unsolicited bulk e-mail
- Make sure that your reply link to contact you works for your targeted customers to contact you whenever they want to

Finally, please keep in mind that your e-mail marketing campaign is a weapon to supplement your E-marketing plan. Every e-mail you send out reflects about you and your company. Hence, put this technology to the right use and maximize and improve your relationships with your customers and with it, your profits.

### **Sources:**

<http://www.isoc.org/internet/history>  
<http://livinginternet.com/e/ei.htm>