THE BASICS

EMAIL MARKETING GUIDE
PART 2

Step Three: Elements of Great Email

FROM – SENDER'S NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESS

Spam filters will check the "from" line, making accuracy and relevancy a must. A "from" email address ending with numbers is a red flag. The most important spam filter that you must get past is that of the recipient. Under CAN-SP@M compliance, you must use a valid and relevant (not misleading) email address. Is the email address you are using for this campaign one that you always use? Is it one that will already be identified as a "Trusted Sender" or known contact or brand to your subscribers? If you are creating a campaign for your first time, use an email that someone will recognize.

SUBJECT

While all recipients read the Subject line, a minority (10 to 40 percent) are typically opened. Knowing who the email is from is of foremost importance. But is the email relevant to the recipient? Having a short, to the point, relevant subject line is the next thing recipients need. This element of an email campaign is one of the easiest to test and can have a significant impact on the overall results. Is the subject short and to the point? Is it something that makes one want to open and read more? Is it clear of any keywords that will trigger spam traps or email filters, ensuring deliverability?

SALUTATION

The greeting is an important element and should be personalized in most instances, but occasionally it is better to use a generic term that describes the situation. Sometimes it's best to use no subject line at all. Recipients may react better to an email that begins with "Dear Valued Shopper:" as opposed to "Dear Steve:" This will also reinforce the message you are getting across and what the email pertains to. For the previous example, such an email has something to do with a previous shopping experience and/or a current or future promotion. Do you personalize your greeting to the individual? Does it make the subscriber want to read more?

PREVIEW PANE

Having the most relevant and revealing information in the first couple lines will also assist recipients in identifying what your email is about and if they will open it. Also consider that many people will not scroll down in an Outlook preview pane, so having a call to action or value proposition toward the top of the email will help convert reads to clicks.

Many users either have their images turned off, or receive text-only email. The read/open rate on this campaign increased 27% after this clever alt tag was added.

Many email programs will display the first few lines of your email in the body of the email preview pane. Is your call to offer or value proposition clearly visible without scrolling? Are the alt tags of your images filled out in case some recipients have images turned off? Is the preview pane going to show and image or text? This is important to know as many web-based email systems now default to turn images off and will only display the placeholder symbol. Making sure that your header or email format will allow for clearly visible text and not simply images will increase your chances for reads and conversions.

BODY COPY

What do you want to say to your customer? This is where you want to get your message across. Why should your customer do what you want them to do? You need to convince your target audience to take an action by showing them why it's in their interest to do so. What is the information or offer, and how much do you need to say to encourage click-through to more information or an offer? Newsletters traditionally employ leads in copy (three to five sentences) with a link to read more.

Writing Effective Copy

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Tailor your message to your desired audience and objective. Know what motivates your recipients and use it to determine how to describe the benefits of your offer. Your "from" line is very important. Recipients open emails from people and companies they know and respect, so be consistent and use your brand.

BE CONCISE

Your subject line should be 30-40 characters including spaces - that's only 5-8 words total. Your email copy should consist of simple words, short phrases and paragraphs of only 1-3 short sentences.

Keep it simple, yet unique and memorable for each email.

INCLUDE "CALL TO ACTION" LINKS

Your subscribers can click from your email to "learn more," "buy now," "join" etc. Sprinkle your call-to-action links throughout your email so readers can click whenever they are ready.

CREATE A SENSE OF URGENCY

Limit the offer to a specific time period or to the first 50 customers. Try throwing in a bonus (e.g. "Act now and also receive free shipping, a free estimate or a consultation") to sweeten the deal.

PROOFREAD

Read your email copy aloud. If you stumble over words or phrases, rewrite it. Check your spelling and grammar thoroughly. Errors not only make your email harder to read, they can make your company look unprofessional.

GRAPHIC ELEMENTS

A picture is worth a thousand words, but the wrong words are worth nothing to a prospective customer. Images are subject to what a marketer feels is relevant and compelling, and could be offensive and mocking to the recipient. Your customer wants to something they can relate to and be excited about. Is your HTML formatted for all email programs? Does your email marketing platform automatically create the other versions for you or do you need to create multiple versions of HTML for different platforms? Bells and whistles might be important if you are a media or gaming property, but simple HTML always drives the best results and limits errors or presentation problems with some email clients.

This email from the Wacom Power of the Pens campaign shows an example of effective graphic elements in email. Instead of consumers in this email campaign receiving product heavy calls to action, which can feel overwhelming during the holiday email push, they were receiving interesting content with tantalizing artwork. This was an effective strategy allowing Wacom to gain trust and credibility with a customer base that traditionally does not like to be "sold to."

OFFER

Things must be placed in a logical order. Having the email lead off with a value proposition or "grabber" is a great way to start out. Sidebars can be reserved for relative information and reference. Leave the main portion of the email to the most important attribute. If you are sending out a newsletter, reserve the main column for the information you want to give your recipients; and let the secondary column carry other items for audience consideration, such as a survey, access to a whitepaper, a list of sponsors, etc. Is your offer targeted to this list? Is it compelling and clearly positioned? Is it actionable, or does it require additional information to make the decision to move forward? Have they received this offer before? How did they react? Have other lists received this or a similar offer or is it something that is the same offer on your site that is already known?

CALL TO ACTION – HYPERLINKS/BUTTONS

What do you want your customer to do? Making a customer search for the next step is a serious pitfall marketers often overlook. Show the email to a coworker or colleague and see if they can identify what you want the email recipient to do. You have only a moment to gain the recipient's attention, so utilize the entire email in designing most concise and clear path for them to take the desired action. Which action does not matter; it could be brand awareness, purchase, opt-in to further emails, participation in a survey, or registration. The important thing is clarity. What does your call to action look like?

Help yourself to our new brand today.

Dig In ▸

When it comes to great products and service, we're the same Wacom you know and love, just with a new flavor. See what we've been cooking up at **www.wacom.com.**

Top and bottom to the left, linked web text and a button image. Two examples of a call to action that are visually distinct with copy that makes customers click.

breaches. The pressure on retailers to achieve and prove compliance with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) is intensifying. Servers have been the primary focus of compliance...

SIGN UP NOW »

Step Four: Putting it into Action

Now that you have decided what you want your campaign to do, to whom you are sending it to, and what it is going to look like, you need to make sure the campaign is delivered and watched carefully.

SAAS OR IN-HOUSE EMAIL MARKETING PLATFORM?

The ultimate success of an email newsletter or direct response campaign resides in the technology. You have a limited set of options when it comes to managing large volumes of emails on a regular basis. As a company, you can build, buy or rent an email marketing solution. Building an email development, distribution and tracking application in-house allows for total customization, but can be cost-prohibitive and require multiple people on your payroll to maintain. Often, time is of the essence in email campaigns. Requiring in-house resources (that may be shared by different departments) can delay your campaign and buying an application can also be costly to purchase and install, let alone maintain.

Various software and service providers offer applications that help create, send and track emails. Many of these are application service providers (ASPs), which mean that they allow you to "rent" the use of the platform. Not only is the ASP model less risky from a cost perspective, you typically get the benefit of ongoing support and upgrades as part of the package. More robust applications integrate with your site traffic analysis and CRM software. Most importantly, the purchase decision for ASP software resides with marketing, rather than IT, as it is a separate entity that does not effect the internal corporate network. Knowing the privacy, data and security policies of an ASP is very important as you will trust this solution with your customer and data. By choosing a company that has a proven track record, clear policies, expert support and the ability to provide a flexible cost environment, you will be successful and stay a step ahead of those with in-house software solutions.

STANDARDIZED SET OF FEATURES YOU SHOULD CONSIDER WHEN EVALUATING VARIOUS SOLUTIONS:

- Create HTML and text emails without knowing HTML - WYSIWYG

- Upload and manage email lists in an automated fashion and provide integration tools that can be used in your website

- Multipart auto-detection systems—deliver whichever format is best for each recipient, whether it be HTML or text

- Personalize messages by name or other pre-determined element to each group or individual

- Auto-responder technology to send emails based on actions of subscribers

- Track sends, bounces, unsubscribes, opens, clicks and forward-to-a-friends

- Track recipient behavior once they are on the website (conversion data)

- Automatically manage bounces, unsubscribes and website registrations

- Segment list by unique recipient attributes for future communications

- Data security and support

- Dynamic data fields to deliver targeted information

Step 5: Tracking and Measuring ROI

With direct mail, you may never know how effective your campaign was unless you required the recipient to bring in the postcard, or call with a reference number. (PIN code has eliminated that. At minimum, an email platform should be able to track:

SENT:
The number of emails sent

READS:
The number of people that opened your email

CLICKS:
The number of recipients that opened the email and clicked on one of the links

BOUNCED:
Emails that returned for a variety of reasons (email address does not exist, bad domain, connection problems with mail host, filtered, etc.)

CONVERSIONS:
Form fields filled out, downloads, transactions completed, and in the case of advertisers, general traffic

It is very helpful to have access to the above information, but they only provide high-level statistics. The aforementioned statistics are helpful if you want to test how good a list is or what regional or demographical differences exist, but they do not tell you much about what is going on after they click through to your website.

Being able to track beyond the click is something that email marketers and platforms have had a very difficult time developing—eROI's emailROI platform has this functionality. By being able to track actions beyond a click to website, you can gather useful information that was previously unattainable. You could make assumptions based on coincidence, but what CFO makes financial decisions based on "chance"?

Why is it important to track a customer from email receipt to shopping cart or whitepaper download? Well, if you work like most successful businesses, you want to know if your dollars are being spent wisely. Most email platforms give you the ability to provide campaign statistics but what a customer does beyond that is a shot in the dark. emailROI lets you accurately assess return on investment. If a company spent $1,000 on an email campaign and looked at the eROItracks data to find the company realized $10,000 worth of revenue from that very campaign, you could decidedly say the campaign was a success.

Statistics drill-down to email recipients who have read, clicked, unsubscribed or who have sent the email to a friend. Detailed graphs break out email recipients who have read or clicked on the email once, twice, three+ times. Email click-through is also overlaid on the email creative.

Analyze This

The most common mistake novice email marketers make is not thoroughly analyzing their campaign data. Investing some time into review of response data is important, because when done properly it will help determine what worked, what didn't and help you set the course for your next email. Most email application providers offer enough data to determine which elements work best, assuming you have a solid understanding of their reporting engine. The best way to understand how well a campaign performed is to benchmark it against similar campaigns. The more often you send and test emails, the better the benchmarks. Over time, you will get a feel for what types of offers and calls to action work best. As we mentioned earlier, email marketing is an iterative, ongoing process.

When analyzing the success of an email marketing campaign, it's important to understand how the overall campaign will generate a return on investment. The basic formula for determining return on investment (ROI) is campaign revenue over cost. For example, an email campaign that cost a company $1,000 and generated $2,000 in sales resulted in an ROI of 2 to 1 (200%).

Campaign revenue can be difficult to determine without establishing proper metrics and tracking. While most campaigns are designed to generate revenue, few have the infrastructure in place to accurately track email-generated sales vs. other channels. One of the easiest ways to track ROI for sales is to track the number of hits on an order confirmation page that originated from an email. For more complex products or

services that are not sold via e-commerce, other metrics must be incorporated. For campaigns with a call to action involving a download or registration, the company must first calculate the value of each "qualified lead" in order to determine what the ROI will be. This is best accomplished by backward-calculating the cost of each new customer.

For example, one company determined that 1 in every 10 free trial registrations resulted in a $1,500 sale (or a 10 percent conversion rate), and was worth $1,000 in profit. In order to break even on a campaign that cost $2,000, they would have to generate 2 new customers, or 20 registrations. If their industry standard click-through rate was 5 percent, that would require them to have a list of at least 400 emails in order to achieve a break even. Any increase in list size, response or conversion would be pure profit.

Costs can be difficult to accurately assess, especially if in-house resources are utilized. When calculating overall costs, be sure to include time and money spent on all aspects of a campaign: list, strategy, creative, infrastructure, testing and analysis. Since in-house talent is difficult to assess from a cost-perspective, we'll focus on outsourced costs. As discussed earlier in this chapter, list rental fees range from .05 to .50 per name. Typical strategy, creative and analysis provided by email marketing agencies varies in price per hour. ASP email service providers can charge anywhere from .05 to .0025 per email to send, depending on volume.

Conclusion

Over the course of this guide, we've covered various components of a successful campaign, including: the benefits of email marketing, strategy, creative, infrastructure, testing and analysis. We hope you've found value in our overview and recommendations. All of this information fuels improvements that increase open, read and response rates, and improve the efficacy of your site in supporting the acquisition of prospects and their conversion to customers. When it comes to making sales, every conversion counts.

For more information regarding eROI or emailROI please feel free to call 503-221-6200 or email sales@eroi.com. You can also visit eROI on the web at eroi.com. For more in-depth product information on the emailROI platform, please visit emailroi.com.