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Email Marketing Realities

By Talbert Williams

Reality television has swept the nation, in case you haven't noticed. Everyone's talking about who should be kicked off this or that show next and why somebody or another can't last for long. People seem to enjoy talking about the "baddies" and "goodies," and apparently some primal need is filled when dealing with the "realities" of different situations.

I'd like to sweep some reality into email marketing as well. Here are a few issues that are being taken more seriously and starting to become best practices. Don't get kicked off your island, and take notice.

Make unsubscribing easy. The systems to handle subscriptions and unsubscriptions are starting to actually work and make my life easier. Many opt-in emails I get these days have very easy-to-use systems to handle my subscription. They range from one-click subscriptions and unsubscriptions all the way to the online email subscription and preference center, where you can select what you do and don't want to receive and in what format — all on one screen.

These systems are a must. The reality is that email-based subscription and unsubscription systems that force you to email a message with a specific body or subject line are error prone and not user friendly. I vote that technique off the island.

Make messages relevant. The emails I get contain more relevant information. The well-designed emails that work usually come from the big three product categories of e-tailing: books, music, and computer/electronics. These emails are the best because they demonstrate how the products are used and always show the price prominently.

These emails mirror traditional direct marketing (which we know works well). Some special approaches work as well, such as tying in geographically relevant information (e.g., closest bookstore to your zip code), but usually when the email becomes too complex, my interest is lost.

Make messages interactive. Your audience needs to be listened to. I know this has been driven into the ground, but the curmudgeon really hates it when people don't listen. Most times when I reply to a marketing email with a request and await a response, I get nothing. Thankfully, some of the emails

have phone numbers to call, and that works 99 percent of the time and much more effectively than the email method.

The basic idea is that when you send out email, you should expect to get something back. (Usually about 1 percent of your outbound email will come back as actual requests from your customers.) People like to share ideas, concerns, questions, and rants. If you ignore them, don't expect them to remain customers for long.

Pay attention to demographics. The spam-meisters must have known something everyone else didn't. The increase in Spanish-language spam that I have been getting is possibly linked to the most recent Census 2000 findings. The Hispanic and Latino population increased to over 12 percent of the U.S. population, a 58 percent increase since the last census, taken in 1990.

This is a newsworthy event, not something to brush off. The demographic makeup of your customers is changing, and notions such as language, format, and the people featured in your marketing message cannot be taken for granted and may need to be reviewed. You may be surprised what you find and how many new customers you attract.

So there you have it -- a few ideas that can help you stay on the island that is email marketing.

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Talbert Williams offers debt consolidation, debt reduction, credit card debt referrals and advice. For more information, articles, news, tools and valuable resources on debt solutions, visit this site:

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3 Essential Tools for Email Marketers

By Jinger Jarrett

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Marketing your business with email is an art.

It's very easy to get accused of spamming nowadays. Add to that the filters ISPs are using, and your message may not get through.

If you do it right, email marketing can become a very effective method of marketing your business.

Before you consider this method, there are three tools

I consider absolutely crucial to your success.

1. Educate yourself.

Get accused of spamming and you could destroy your reputation forever.

Learn everything you can about email marketing and implement those strategies in your marketing campaign.

Here are two sites you can use to educate yourself about email marketing:

Email Results – <http://www.emailresults.com/> – This site offers a newsletter, a directory of lists, and plenty of articles.

Email Education – <http://www.emaileducation.com> – Also offers articles to help you learn how to use email to market your business. You'll also get information on the latest trends in email marketing as well as the latest news.

2. Email Formatting Utility

Once you've written your email, you want to make sure it looks professional.

Check for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. Make sure it is easy to read.

You can use this utility to format your emails to the right width. It's not perfect, but it will save you plenty of time because you can format your text at different widths. Overall, it does a very good job.

<http://www.jbmckee.com/formatit/index.htm>

3. Anti-Spam

Before you send your message out, you want to check to make sure it can get past the filters frequently used by ISPs.

There's a simple and easy way to check your message. SiteSell.com has created a new feature called Spam Check.

Basically, you can send a your email as a test message and find out how the filters rank it. Then, you can make changes to your email before sending it to your list.

<http://spamcheck.sitesell.com>

Email marketing is a time consuming process. Done right, it can be a very lucrative tool in your marketing arsenal. These tools will help you make your email marketing efforts more effective.



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