

INCREASE YOUR SALES AND PROFITS WITH PERSONALIZED MESSAGES

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By Bob Leduc

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I paid bills last night. After writing checks on the business account I noticed a little sticky note on the next check reminding me to get more checks printed.

My mail this morning included a sale catalog from an office supply company I use. The back cover included a picture of the same style business check I've been using. Printed over the check was the following personal message: "Bob ...Don't be caught short. Stock up now for the coming year and save up to 73 percent." I immediately called them with my order.

This big corporation understands the value of personalized messages. Their system "remembers" how often I order certain items and produces a personalized offer on schedule. I'm sure this personalization develops sales for them at a rate many times greater than their nearest competitor.

Personalized messages offer an even greater advantage for small businesses. Plus, it's an easy and inexpensive procedure to implement.

THE MOST IMPORTANT WORD

What's the most important word you know? It's your name. The most important word your prospects and customers know is their name. It's a powerful magnet you can use anytime you want to get their immediate attention.

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For example, I always include my customer's or prospect's first name on the subject line of my outgoing email messages. It immediately attracts attention and guarantees my message gets read. I do this manually. But you may want to investigate some of the software developed to merge different text into the subject line and body copy of each email message.

YOU NEED A REAL NAME

You already have the personal names of your customers. You'll also have personal names when you compile or rent a prospect list for postal mail. The name is part of the

postal address. But you may not have the personal name for most of the prospects you collected online at your web site or from email requests. Often you have only their email address.

I discovered an effective alternative to use when I don't have a person's real name. It's hidden in every email address. It's the part of the email address to the left of the "@" symbol. For an email address of "AB6@yz.com", it's the "AB6" portion. I insert this part of the email address where I would normally put the person's first name. It's not as personal as the real first name but it attracts more attention and produces a higher response than no personalization.

Make a habit of collecting and storing the real name of each prospect in addition to their email address so you can use it to personalize your messages to them. Look for it in the header of the email message when the sender doesn't "sign" the message.

TIP: You'll automatically get more real names in email messages by revealing your real name first. I do this by using my real name as my email address. Over 75 percent of the email messages I receive include the sender's real first name.

DON'T OVERDO IT!

Use a person's name no more than 2 or 3 times in a communication. Inserting it too many times annoys the reader

and broadcasts that the message is part of an automated mass mailing.

Sometimes you don't need much more than a prospect's name to get results. For example, I send a lot of prospecting postcards by postal mail to targeted lists. The only message on the postcard is the recipient's name followed by a benefit statement plus a phone number, email address or web site address where the prospect can get more information. I always get a high response because each recipient is attracted by their name and can't resist reading the rest of my brief message. None of these postcards get tossed without being read.

Start personalizing your communications to prospects and customers. It will substantially increase the response you get — without increasing your costs.

Personalizing Autoresponders

By Anton Cheranov

Have you ever walked into a store in your town, and been addressed by name? This has probably happened to you at stores that you frequent often. The shop owner knows your name, and uses it. He remembers you, and he wants you to know that he cared enough about you and your business to remember you. In the offline world, this is just one aspect of customer support.

Customer service like this is almost impossible to achieve on the Internet, but some semblance of it can exist when you personalize your autoresponder messages. Autoresponder messages can be set up to address people by their first or last name - or both. In fact, there is quite a bit of personalized information that can be added, depending on the autoresponder that you are using.

The information is included in the autoresponder messages by using codes. Each autoresponder will use different codes to insert the information in your messages. You simply write your message, and put the codes where you want the personalized information to appear. For instance, your message may start out with `Hello (code for first name)! In this case, the person's first name will be inserted where that code is.

Personalizing your autoresponder messages will most likely improve your response rate. Research has shown that emails that are personalized with the person's first name are opened more often, and those people are generally more receptive to the contents of the email message. It is usually very easy to do. You write one message, using the codes where you want the personalization, then, no matter who that one email is sent out to, their personal information will appear where the codes are.

Of course, the autoresponder must collect the information first. This is done with the use of forms that

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activate the autoresponder. For instance, if you are giving away a free ebook, and you have your visitor fill out a form with their email address to receive the download instructions for the ebook by email, that form should collect any type of information that you want for personalization - such as a first name, as well as the email address. If that information is not collected, the autoresponder won't have anything to insert where that code appears in your messages!

Take a look around the control panel of your autoresponder, and find out what type of personalization you can add to your autoresponder messages. You may be very surprised at the improved results!

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