

Secrets to E-mail Marketing Campaigns

The Direct Marketing Association says that these are some secrets to e-mail marketing campaigns. Though they focus mainly on in house lists, these tips can help us achieve better results for our Clients.

The message is the medium. *This applies mostly to in house lists for a company's internal use.* Literally. The subject line, the "TO"; and "FROM" are critical. An e-mail campaign's biggest hurdle is getting opened. Recipients delete much of their e-mail based on the "TO"; and "FROM" line information. Be clear and conserve space.

Most e-mail browsers don't show the entire subject line or "FROM" field. Optimize your space by turning the subject, *example* "Get your Free Cincinnati Bell Widget" into "Get your Free Widget" and use the "FROM" information to get Cincinnati Bell across. **A good rule of thumb is that the subject line must say either something they can't ignore or something they can't afford not to do. You have 25 characters and two seconds to get it opened.**

Make the first 10 lines count. That's the average size of an opened message on a typical PC screen or preview pane. Lead with your best what's-in-it-for-me pitch. Don't be apologetic, appreciative or otherwise squishy within this valuable real estate. Get to the point and fulfill the promise suggested in the subject line. If you can't get the whole story across in this space, make the content draw the user's eye deeper into the e-mail. Partial bullets, split pictures, animated graphics and numbered paragraphs entice the recipient to read on.

Keep it simple. Internet readers generally don't read; they scan. Keep your sentences short and sweet. Use words that pop and are interesting, but not confusing. Bulleted lists are far better than comma-separated lists to explain benefits, features or outline a process. Experience has shown that once an interesting word is found, the viewer will read around for meaning. It is important that any concept be contextually relevant within one or two lines before or after any word grouping. This is true for graphics also.

Call to action. Don't make the reader hunt for the link to respond to your offer. Scatter links throughout the text and graphics. You never know when your reader will be moved to click. Fulfill on all implied and explicit promises. An Order Now link should dump the user well within the ordering process. If you say FREE, then give it up. Don't make the user wade through extensive qualifications. Credibility and patience are paper-thin online. **You're always just a click away from the trash.**

Personalize with name appropriately. You engage in a personal dialogue with an individual as soon as you enter their inbox. Show throughout your message that you appreciate and respect this privilege. Give them content, graphics and subject lines that honor them and the relationship that you wish to develop with them. But remember, not all personalization is good. If the graphics, links or content can be customized, do it. Nothing outside of face-to-face contact comes so close to one-to-one marketing.

Keep your in-house list and database up-to-date. *Doesn't really apply to us, but is good information to have at your disposal.* Targeted e-mail to an in-house list gives you the most control you'll ever find over a marketing campaign. You own the list, control the frequency of contact, know the opt-in preferences and can leverage your back-end systems to target and deliver

relevant content. A relationship with someone for whom you have not only an e-mail address, but a physical address, plus purchase, response, preference and complaint history is powerful.

Smart e-mail marketers know from experience how important e-mail campaigns can be to their customers: saving them time and money and showing that loyalty is recognized and rewarded. Never forget that the permission is the customer's, not yours. It is always being negotiated and can be terminated at any time.