

Are You Using E-mail Marketing?

By Tony LLOYD

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"Should I consider e-mail marketing when planning my promotion strategy? What's all the hype about e-mail marketing?" Consider the numbers and see for yourself why e-mail marketing can be very cost-effective in promoting your product or service.

The one thing that computer users do more than anything else, is send and receive e-mail. At the end of the year 2000, there were close to 100 million active e-mail users in the US. These users are defined as those in the 14 years and older age group who send or receive 5 or more e-mail per week. It is estimated that by the year 2003, there will be 140 million active e-mail users.

When computers users were asked during many polls, what their main reason for going online is, approximately 90% said "e-mail." After turning on the computer, 70% of users say the first thing they do is check their e-mail.

Unfortunately, many e-mail users have to sort through unwanted and unsolicited e-mail to get to the ones they really want. Most times they will simply delete an e-mail if they do not recognize whom it is coming from. This presents a challenge if you are going to use e-mail marketing in your promotion campaign.

Sending e-mail to someone who did not request any business related material is a NO-NO. This is unsolicited e-mail marketing commonly referred to as SPAM. Your Internet account could be canceled if someone reports you to your ISP for 'spamming' or you could be 'flamed' by those who are not thrilled about receiving something they did not ask for.

E-mail marketing should be targeted at those who are interested in what you have to offer. An opt-in list would have the e-mail addresses of persons interested in your product or service. This is a list of persons who have requested more information about what you have to offer or something similar. Your e-mail marketing campaign will involve an opt-in list that you have developed or one that you have rented from a reputable company like NetCreations - www.postmasterdirect.com .

"NetCreations have the largest network of high quality, targeted opt-in email addresses on the Internet - more than 3,000 topical lists and more than 30 million email addresses...Their partner sites include About.com, CMPnet, internet.com, CDROM Guide, LuckySurf and CNET. With a minimum order of \$1,000, you can rent their 100% Opt-In ® email lists -- and they will mail out your message for free! Their lists cost 10 to 35 cents a name (\$100 to \$350 CPM), including list rental, email delivery and merge/purge."

One disadvantage of renting a list is that you are allowed to send e-mail to the list only once. The list is rented with the agreement that it is for one time use only. However, studies have shown that you have to present your offer to your target list more than once for you to get a reasonable response of 2-17%.

A much better alternative is to develop your own opt-in list. You can do this by asking visitors to your web site to sign up for your weekly, bi-weekly or monthly newsletter or sign up for a series of articles or tutorials. The word "free" attracts many responses. If you offer the winner of a contest something of value, you will get many persons to sign up. The prize MUST be related to what you have to offer for the opt-in list to be worth the time and effort. You can also offer free and valuable information by autoresponders. The e-mail address for the autoresponder could be placed on your web site, in a classified ad or a display ad.

It is very important to remember that although you have permission to send e-mail to each member of your opt-in list, the e-mail may arrive unexpectedly in his or her Inbox. To avoid having your e-mail deleted before it is read, your e-mail must grab the attention of the viewer. It should have a simply and appealing subject line. Treat the subject line like a headline for an ad. If you can personalize each mail, you will increase the chance of having your e-mail read.

Here are a few rules to follow when you write your business letter to your opt-in list. Each line should be no more than 70 characters in length - preferably 65 characters or less. Write short paragraphs. As much as possible write in the second person. Or simply put, think of one person and write to that person using the word YOU generously.

Write with feeling and enthusiasm. Make your words come alive with powerful and dynamic words. Use words that most people are familiar with. Ask pointed questions to stir certain emotions. Remember people's buying decisions are usually made on emotions not logic.

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