

Direct Mail Advertising; Email Is Not Like Postal Mail.

By Bobette Kyle

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One of the most popular and potentially effective advertising methods is direct email. If you deliver a well-written message and execute delivery properly you will be rewarded with new leads, sales, and traffic to your Web site. If the message is poorly written or you commit a netiquette faux pas, however, your efforts could end in disaster.

If you are new to Internet marketing, you might equate direct email to direct postal mail. The concepts are very similar; in both you broadcast a standard message to a large number of individuals in hopes of receiving positive responses. To the uninitiated, it is logical to assume you can approach the two in the same way. It seems like the only difference is the means of communication. If you are thinking this way, STOP! STOP! STOP!

Many people perceive unsolicited commercial message (UCE) - spam - differently than junk mail from the postal service. The sender pays for direct mail sent through the postal service. Not so for UCE. Spam on the Internet ties up the recipient's resources by using storage space, slowing down systems, and sometimes crashing equipment. For this reason and others, many abhor spam. Some assertively condemn spammers. If you spam you will undoubtedly be reported to your ISP and email provider. Depending on the circumstances, your accounts could be closed and your Web site may be shut down. Need I say it? This is NOT the result you are looking for from your email marketing program.

Some email advertisers feel that as long as there are unsubscribe instructions in the email or they only send one message it is okay to send unsolicited email. A few use never-passed legislative proposals in their defense. In marketing, perception is far closer to reality than loophole rationalizations. Some recipients are offended whether the unsubscribe phrase is there or not and they are offended even when they receive only one message from you.

Different individuals define spam differently. Some consider all forms of UCE or unsolicited commercial postings spam. This means that if you send advertisements without prior permission from the individuals you will get complaints. In all likelihood you will be reported as a spammer. Because service providers generally have user agreements that are stricter than current U.S. state and federal laws, you are likely to be reprimanded, have your site shut down, and/or be put on a blacklist if you send out UCE.

Spam/UCE Law

As of this writing there are no U.S. federal laws governing UCE. Some states, however, have laws

that regulate UCE. These states are California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, North Carolina, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia. Depending on the state, allowable claims range from \$10 per message up to unlimited damages. Most state laws allow opt-out procedures. In other words, companies can *legally* add a recipient's email to a list without his/her knowledge as long as a means of removal is provided. For details by state, go to <http://law.spamcon.org/us-laws/index.shtml> .

International laws are stricter. Seven countries - Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, and Norway - have opt- in laws. In order to legally send UCE, you must first have the recipient's permission. Other countries have opt- out directives or pending legislation. EuroCAUCE provide details at <http://www.euro.cauce.org/en/countries/index.html> .

Worldwide, there is much discussion about UCE and laws are changing quickly. There are several sites you can monitor for details about UCE. These include the SpamCon Foundation (law.spamcon.org), the Coalition Against Unsolicited Commercial Email (CAUCE, www.cauce.org), and the spam section of The Open Directory Project (dmoz.org/Computers/Internet/Abuse/Spam).

More Email Marketing Resources

SpamCon Help for Email Marketers:

<http://www.spamcon.org/marketers/index.shtml>

SpamCon Links to Blacklists:

<http://www.spamcon.org/directories/shared-blacklists.shtml>

WebSiteMarketingPlan.com Links to Email Advertising

Resources <http://www.websitemarketingplan.com/sr10.htm>

Wilson Internet Links to Email Advertising Articles

<http://www.wilsonweb.com/cat/cat.cfm?page=1&subcat=me> Email-Gen

About the Author

Bobette Kyle is author of "How Much For Just the Spider? Strategic Web Site Marketing." She used techniques detailed in the book to bring her own site, WebSiteMarketingPlan.com, from a ranking of 17 million to 59 thousand+ in less than four months. <http://www.WebSiteMarketingPlan.com/sr.htm>

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