SENDING SUCCESS: TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE EMAIL MARKETING

Email can be an extremely powerful marketing tool, but only if recipients read your messages. Here are some tips that could boost the effectiveness of your emails.

KEEP SUBJECT LINES CONCISE

More than 105 billion emails are sent each day, which means your message could become lost in the noise long before the recipient ever gets the chance to click on it. Yet that doesn't mean your subject lines should shout at people or use gimmicks to grab their attention. All-caps demands to "HURRY BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE" come off as spam to most people. Be clear about what the message contains, be concise and try phrasing in the form of a question to create intrigue.

TIMING MATTERS

Even the most compelling content can go ignored if it arrives in someone's inbox at the wrong time. When you send your emails may be just as important as what they contain. Studies have found that the best days to send emails are in the middle of the week — with Tuesday having the most engagement. Mid-morning is the optimal time to send if you want the most people to open your messages, so try to schedule them to be sent around 10 a.m.

SEGMENT YOUR SUBSCRIBER LIST

No two customers are exactly the same. Although you may not have the time to reach out to every single one of your clients individually, you can come much closer with a segmented campaign. By dividing your mailing list into smaller categories, you could focus your message in such a way that you're more likely to make a connection with a greater number of people. For example, you could create a category of customers for a specific product or service based on your data. It's been found that click-through rates on segmented campaigns are 100.95 percent higher than on those that take a one-size-fits-all approach.

USE IMAGES STRATEGICALLY

Any images included in your emails should be used with care. Pictures larger than 1 MB in size could make the message slow to open. Messages with a large number of attachments or embedded photos also may be flagged by a server's spam filter. These are good reasons to use them sparingly, and only if you're confident that they add more value than plain text.

OPTIMIZE FOR MOBILE

The convenience of smartphones and other mobile devices means a staggering number of emails never see a desktop screen. Because 61.9 percent of emails are opened on mobile devices, you should build your emails with responsive design. Make sure your emails look just as good on a smaller screen as they do on a larger one, and that they will scale properly for a vertical orientation. This should go hand in hand with optimizing your e-commerce site for phones, because customers can go between email and their online shopping carts more easily that way.

STAY OUT OF SPAM FOLDERS

A study found that nonprofits miss an average of $15,000 in donations each year because a portion of their fundraising emails are caught by spam filters. To avoid that fate befalling your messages, make sure you're not sending to anyone who hasn't opted in to receiving from you. You also shouldn't write subject lines in all capital letters; nor should you use exclamation points. Provide recipients with a link to unsubscribe, and make sure your message includes a physical mailing address.

BUILD COMPELLING CONTENT

Once you clear the hurdle of grabbing someone's attention and convincing him or her to open your email, you're still not at the finish line. The body copy of your messages should be short, punchy and easy to scan. Use bulleted lists and strategic formatting to call attention to your key points. Employ the inverted pyramid structure to make sure the most important information is presented upfront, and the less-vital details come later. Content that's written with a friendly tone helps boost conversion rates, too.

TEST EVERYTHING

It is imperative to check and double-check every element of your messages before sending them. This includes testing them on all major email platforms as well as on a variety of devices. Emails that don't open properly, aren't scaled for the screen or feature broken links are likely to be ignored. Any malfunctioning element can push recipients to unsubscribe from your mailing list, so be sure everything works as it should.

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