

email marketing
report 2008 (part one)

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Welcome

This is part one of a two-part report giving information and education on email marketing this year.

At Blueleaf we have had the pleasure of running email marketing campaigns for many of our clients and are delighted that we can give some of our experience back to you through this report.

Summary - just in case you don't have time to read the full report

Personalisation

Personalisation improves open rates and click rates.

“Dear valued customer” or anything similar is damaging your brand – it screams that you don't value customers enough to use their name when addressing them.

Be specific

People will only respond to specific requests.

Generic advertising messages will not give you a great return on email marketing. You need to request a specific action in every email that you send.

Make it easy to unsubscribe

You will damage your business if you make it hard to unsubscribe.

If you make it hard it will damage your brand time and time again when people get emails they do not want – and people talk to other people.

Make it easy to view

The more ways people can see the email, the better.

Always add a link at the top of your email linking to a web version of the email. Sometimes email clients can make a mess of your email – don't let your message get lost.

Make it easy to send on

The more people see your email, the better.

If you make it simple for people to get the message to their friends, then they will do so. Spread your message as far as possible and add a send to a friend link.

Delivery

It's never been more cost effective to invest in a proper system.

You shouldn't be using Outlook to send your email marketing – it's more likely to be spammed and is less personal. Using a proper system improves your delivery rate.

Blueleaf?

Blueleaf is a passionate design, advertising and digital agency. We love what we do and we believe that work and fun don't have to be mutually exclusive. If you love what you do, other people will love it too.

I take it you do email marketing?

Yes, we do. We have created a system that does everything we have talked about and either we or you can manage all your email marketing.

Contact

Email me at rob@blue-leaf.co.uk or call the office number 01829 260 600.

Six essential email marketing tips

Email marketing, like so many elements of internet marketing, is easy to do. However, there are far too many companies not doing it right and there are many incremental aspects to email marketing that need to be considered to make sure you have a massively effective return on your campaign.

Before we get into the tips themselves, just one word about how you can use email marketing. It's not just to sell products. It can be used for a wide range of marketing and business purposes, including:

- Selling products and services
- Sending information updates
- Updating people on your latest news
- Sending a release to the press
- Sending out a warning of any potential downtime/loss of service
- Reminders of services about to expire
- Sending out seasonal emails – Christmas, Easter, etc
- Sending invites to an event

We're pretty sure that's just the tip of the iceberg. The great thing about all of these uses is that they are a touching point with the customer or client of your business. Every single touching point is an opportunity to make an impression and further position your brand – you should take advantage of every one.

The following tips have no real priority over each other – they are all important. The key message is at the top of each tip.

Number 1: Personalisation

Key message: Personalisation improves open rates and click rates

Do you like being greeted by name at your local coffee or sandwich shop? We know we do. So why should email be any different?

If you send an email to a list of people and have no personalisation details in it, how do you start it? Do you use just 'Hello' or to 'To whom it may concern' or 'Dear valued customer'?

All of the above messages scream one thing to the recipient – I am not valued enough for this company to even use my name when communicating with me. I am just another, so called, 'valued customer'. You are more likely to cause significant damage to an existing relationship by devaluing that relationship this way.

Email marketing is becoming an increasingly competitive field – personalisation isn't just useful and helpful, it is an essential part of your email marketing and you should not start without it.

Number 2: Be specific

Key message: People will only respond to specific requests

What happens when you get bombarded with a generic message in marketing or advertising? You don't really pay attention, and you certainly won't follow up. There are certain times where a generic message is what is needed. For instance the Coca Cola adverts always come on at Christmas – they have no specific message but they are brand building which is very important.

When it comes to email marketing though, you are looking for a response. You can't get that response without requesting something first and that request must be specific.

For example:

“Our latest widget will help you do xyz, please feel free to contact us about this or any other of our great range of products”

is nowhere near as good as:

“Our latest widget will help you do xyz, if you were to reply to this email we'll be in touch to arrange your free consultation – an opportunity not be missed”

This may sound a little bit over the top but it is much more likely to provoke a response from the customer. The language used will be different for your company, but do be specific.

Number 3: Make it easy to unsubscribe

Key message: You will damage your business if you make it hard to unsubscribe

This cannot be stressed enough.

People should have a one click unsubscribe function. There should not be any further process involved. They shouldn't have to enter their email address, login and change their preferences or anything of the sort. One click and they're done.

If you make it difficult people will give up quickly as they do not want to spend their time on getting out. So they give up. As far as you are concerned they are still a subscriber so you email them again. Now they are exasperated and annoyed as it brings back the pain of last time's experience. Every single time you email someone after they have tried to unsubscribe you are damaging your brand again and again.

Number 4: Make it easy to view

Key message: The more ways people can see it, the better

Email clients (the software you use to read emails, e.g. Outlook, Apple mail, Hotmail etc) are unreliable. They have a myriad of different rules for displaying emails. This can affect how your emails are viewed.

In some clients the email might get a little confused, not display correctly or not be the right size for their preview pane. How can we solve this?

Have a web version available online. At the top of your emails have a message that says 'If this email does not display correctly, click here' that takes them to the web version where the customer will be able to view your email clearly as intended.

That way you don't lose what could have been a potential sale if only they had seen the email.

Number 5: Make it easy to send on

Key message: The more people see it, the better

You need to grow your distribution list. Everyone knows other people.

If you're sending out some information or details of an offer, it's better if more people see it. So make it easy for people to send it on to more people.

At the top of the email (next to your web version link described before) add another link saying something like 'To forward to a friend, click here' which then takes them to a form where that person's email address is entered.

Do not add that email address to your list. Just send them the email their friend thought would be good. Adding them to your list without permission is spam and against the Data Protection Act.

Number 6: Delivery

Key message: It's never been more cost effective to do it properly

You shouldn't use Outlook to send your email marketing. If you just use the BCC field it's impersonal and more likely to be spammed. Also, if you're sending large quantities of email your Internet Service Provider (ISP) probably won't be happy.

Using an email marketing system improves the percentage of your emails that get delivered. Many have agreements with the major email providers like Hotmail (now LiveMail), Gmail and Yahoo to white list the emails coming in from their servers.

Proper email marketing systems will also handle post delivery issues such as bounce backs. Any email that bounces back needs to be dealt with and your list needs to be kept clean. Make sure any system you select deals with bounce backs correctly. More information on this in part two of our report next week.

In part two

In part two we'll be discussing more about email marketing, including the really juicy stuff from a marketing point of view:

- Measuring results
- Segmentation
- Being consistent
- Keeping your list clean
- Getting data from everywhere
- 7 forms of communication

Blueleaf?

Blueleaf is a passionate design, advertising and digital agency. You'll know this within minutes of meeting us because it's written all over our faces. We love what we do and we believe that work and fun don't have to be mutually exclusive. If you love what you do, other people will love it too. It's contagious!

Just as importantly, we're business-minded people who never lose sight of the task in hand – to create effective marketing solutions that wow both visually and financially.

We're the agency that thinks with its head as well as its heart.

We have a proven track record of helping companies of all sizes from start-ups to multinationals to achieve marketing success. We're a full service agency, providing a powerful combination of strategy, creative concepts, design, copywriting and digital media that make your marketing shine.

I take it you do email marketing?

Yes, we do. We have created a system that does everything we have talked about without you needing to lift a finger if you wish. Or you can get as stuck in as you like and self manage all your email marketing.

To arrange your free consultation just reply to this email or send one to rob@blue-leaf.co.uk. The office number is 01829 260 600 if you'd prefer to talk to us. By the way, we always return your calls and emails within one working day so you won't have to wait long.