<< Back to MediaPost Print Now

emailINSIDER THE INSIDE LINE ON EMAIL MARKETING

Your Email To-Do List For 2012

by Loren McDonald, Thursday, November 17, 2011 11:49 AM

It's that time of year for articles predicting marketing trends for 2012. For this column, however, I'm taking a different approach and outlining several tactics that should be on your 2012 to-do list.

Some of these are tactics that will help you keep up with your competitors, while others could move you ahead of the pack. All are designed to help you deliver a more effective email program -- and, ultimately, achieve your business goals.

List Growth/Data Capture

- Investigate new options and channels that help you acquire more new subscribers and associated data you can use to fine-tune your messages, such as the following:
- Location-based opt-ins using social programs like Foursquare, in-store tablets or kiosks and QR codes on store signage.
- Opting in via SMS text message.
- Social sign-in (subscribers opt in quickly via a social network without filling out innumerable data fields).
- Progressive forms that gather data gradually over a series of prompting emails.
- Optimized preference centers that enable more sophisticated targeting based on demographics and interests.

Deliverability

- Use seed lists or a third-party service to learn your inbox placement rate, not just how many emails didn't get lost to hard bounces and spam traps.
- Discover what's driving spam complaints and deliverability issues and which problems you can control, such as address acquisition source/methods; data hygiene practices; frequency or content.

Design/Content/Frequency

- Redesign your emails to be mobile- and touch-friendly:
- Use scalable emails that adjust the content size as the screen grows or shrinks.
- Redesign navigation, links and CTA image buttons to be clicked easily even by "fat fingers."
- Add mobile versions of emails and landing pages.
- Test and optimize landing and Web pages to maximize conversion from your email traffic.
- Design/redesign email messages to make them shareworthy: easier to share with content that subscribers want to share.
- Add more personality and "voice" to your messages, such as content by employees, subscribers, customers or other stakeholders.
- Design certain email messages to do more than sell -- also educate, inform, intrigue, entertain and engage.
- Leverage your investment in other Web/marketing technologies such as recommendation engines or product review management software and add that content to email messages through dynamic content.
- Test different cadences to find which works best with different engagement levels of subscribers.

Automation and Segmentation

- Launch or tweak a pre-purchase program based on customer behavior, such as browsing or cart-abandonment/remarketing.
- Launch or tweak a post-purchase program including surveys, purchase anniversary, bounceback, product replacement, reviews or ratings.
- Launch or improve transactional emails with better design or dynamic content that incorporates cross-selling, upselling, reviews or other UGC.
- Leverage Web and purchase behavior to implement track-based nurture programs.
- Finally implement that birthday email program because you've been capturing birth date for a few years.
- Automate where possible, sending emails to individuals based on time zone/location or previous engagement times.

Reducing List Churn/Inactivity

- Upgrade from a one-size-fits-all single welcome email to a multi-email "onboarding" program that leverages Web behavior and demographic and interest data.
- Move to early activation rather than waiting until well after subscribers have gone inactive.
- Add an "opt-out alternatives" preference center that enables choice of frequency and address/channel/content changes or even to pause emails for a defined period.

Measurement

- Move beyond process metrics (open and click rates, bounces, unsubscribes and spam complaints) to measure business-driven metrics such as cost reduction, impact on retention, revenue per email or brand value.
- Analyze results by segment, demographic, buyer versus non-buyer, domain, etc., to provide insight for future strategies and programs.

How many of the above have you already knocked off your list? If very few, don't fret, but start by prioritizing your to-dos through a balance of those that deliver the highest ROI and those that increase results but only require a modest level of effort().

What have I missed? What's on your to-do list for 2012?

Until next time, take it up a notch!