

Four killer strategies for creating outstanding email marketing campaigns

By Rebecca Burn-Callander



Guy Levine is the entrepreneur behind digital agency Return On Digital. His online marketing savvy is second to none. Here are his four top tips on creating email marketing campaigns that really bring home the bacon.

Email marketing should be in the arsenal of every company who has access to the internet.

Having the ability to send out a marketing message or sales promotions to thousands of people whenever you like can have a massive effect on any business. However, the glory days are over. People are more aware of spam than ever and as a consequence email servers are working out more sensitive and intelligent ways of filtering out any spam email. If a computer thinks your email is spam, it won't let it through. If a person thinks your content is spam, they will just delete it.

In order to succeed at email, there are four strategies which need to be used and optimised. These are simple but effective. Stick with these and you'll get the best return on your email marketing campaigns.

1. Building a list

In order to make email marketing work, you need to have a list to send to. There are two ways of achieving this: either build a bespoke list that is hungry for your content or buy a list of complete strangers and start spamming them.

There are some really simple ways to get your database going. Try offering some kind of incentive on your website in return for an email address - we like using information such as whitepapers in B2B or using competitions in B2C.

If you have any kind of client induction process, make sure email addresses are collected. Finally, make the content or offers included in your emails so good that they get passed on naturally. It's the easiest way of growing your subscriber base.

2. Develop an offer

For every email you send out, have a clear goal of what you would like people to do when they read it. If it is to purchase a special offer, try and make it so tasty they won't be able to resist.

On the other hand, if you only want a few respondents, make the offer specific to the people you are looking for.

With a big consumer list, the aim is to make a generic offer which suits as many people as possible - this could include free postage or a monetary discount. For a business list, we often suggest writing the mailer to the one person you hope would receive it. Think more carefully sculpted letter as opposed to the Argos catalogue!

3. Design the mailing

When you build your mailer, ideally it should be designed around making sure you get your most required response - such as buying a special offer or requesting a consultation. Everything else should be secondary and not distract in any way.

To do this, make product pictures clear with visible buy buttons which link directly to your site, use larger fonts for important headlines and chose the right balance between text and images.

In Outlook for example, images don't download automatically, so if the whole mailer is an image, viewers won't see anything.

Including text with your sexiest information at the top of the email is a must. It is also essential to include the legal bits such as company address and an unsubscribe link.

4. The tools

There are lots of ways of sending out your email marketing. The most basic is simply using Outlook and BCC lists. While this offers no unsubscribe features or analytics, it will get you started. There are also hundreds of commercial options: Constant Contact is a great option for starting out.

Having data on who opens the emails, which links they click and how many emails get bounced will allow you to refine your strategy as you go.

A few extras

- So, the bits I couldn't fit into the above strategies are:
- Try testing different subject lines to different parts of the list to see which get better opens.
- If you collect people's names when they give you their details, personalise the email. Not just in the 'Dear Joe Bloggs...' opening line, but also in multiple places throughout the email. Seeing your own name in print keeps your attention.
- Email marketing is a numbers game. Keep building the list and watch its profitability grow!