

Building Business with E-mail Newsletters

In this brave new world, getting your company's message out should be an essential part of your multi-channel marketing efforts. For approximately one-third the cost of producing a traditional printed newsletter, your business can work with an agency specializing in interactive media to create and distribute a dynamic e-mail newsletter that reaches an unlimited number of current and potential customers. To achieve the optimum return, apply these fundamental rules:

Complement Your Website

Of course, your new product or service is featured on your website. Also featuring it in your newsletter will increase exposure and interest. Provide an in-depth focus on some aspect of the new offering – for example, use of an advanced technology – to give readers the “inside story” they wouldn't find on the website. In this way, your website and newsletter can complement and drive traffic to each other.

Do Your Homework

Even though you know your target market's interest, you can refine that knowledge to an even greater degree and make it pay off in additional sales. One very accurate method is by tracking the page-by-page activity of visitors to your website. Correct interpretation of this activity gives you valuable information about that visitor's priorities and purchasing intentions. In addition, include a brief survey in your newsletter on a quarterly basis. This will deliver insight into your readers' interests and help you further personalize your message. Keep the survey short (10 questions, maximum) to overcome the reader's resistance to respond. The more you can tailor your newsletter to each recipient, the better chance you have of getting or keeping that person or business as a customer.

Give Your Readers Useful Information

A newsletter should follow the basic rules of good conversational form. If you were meeting face-to-face with one of your newsletter's recipients, would you use that opportunity to tell him/her about the benefits your business/product provide (including sponsorships, partnerships, etc.), or just brag about how great you are? If you involve your readers by offering solutions that can make them more efficient, successful or leading-edge, they'll want to know more and welcome future newsletters. At the same time, convey a sense of urgency to act upon the information your readers are being given. The most effective newscasters create the impression that the information they're delivering is absolutely essential to the well-being of their audience. Do likewise with your newsletter.

Build Community

The recipients of your newsletter want to feel that they're members of a select group who are getting privileged information, which will help them keep ahead of the curve or gain a competitive advantage. Address that unspoken need by establishing your newsletter as this group's definitive “voice.” Establish an identity with a specific point of view, and reinforce it throughout. Including such elements as a regular expert's column, meet-the-customer profile and other similar items will connect members of your target market with each other and with your company.

Pay Attention to Design and Writing

Because members of your target market doubtlessly subscribe to several e-mail newsletters, everyone's a critic. E-mail newsletters now carry the expectations of balanced design, interesting graphics and good writing. Hiring an agency experienced in creating high-impact e-mail newsletters will pay for itself in increased business.

