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Guerrilla Sales & Marketing

Is E-Mail Sleeping With the Fishes?

LORI TURNER

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Editor's Note: This is the first in a three-part series.



Lori Turner

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With social media and text messaging marketing on the rise will e-mail marketing soon be sleeping with the fishes?

A recent 2010 study by ExactTarget says no. More than half (58 percent) of study participants reported starting their online day by reading e-mails.

The way consumers process e-mail, however, is changing. [The Nielsen Co.](#) reported in May that Americans spend 41 percent of their time on mobile devices reviewing and responding to e-mail. This compares with 10.5 percent for social networking.

When you look at total Internet time, however, (mobile devices, desktop computers, laptops, etc), Nielsen reports Americans are spending less time processing e-mail and more time on social networking sites. E-mail time dropped from 11.5 percent of total Internet time to 8.3 percent.

So what are the takeaways? E-mail is still a very big part of the average consumer's day. E-mail volume has grown exponentially and users have less time to read it.

As a result, marketers need more skill and creativity to get consumers to open and read marketing e-mails. And, they need to develop e-mails that are easily navigated on mobile devices.

E-mail is still one of the most cost efficient, measurable and easily targeted marketing forms. Simply slapping an offer in a poorly constructed mass e-mail, however, no longer does the trick.

In this first of a three-part series on e-mail marketing best practices, we'll look at list building. Over the next two weeks, we'll explore examples of best practices in content, design, distribution and measurement.

The most fundamental element to any successful e-mail strategy is a good, clean list of customers, prospects and other brand supporters. When building your list you should:

Seek organic growth opportunities. Identify every conceivable customer and prospect touch-point where you can capture an e-mail address. Consider requiring an e-mail address in order to receive a special discount, earn a free product trial, or download website content. At a bare minimum, capture e-mail addresses when customers place orders.

Allow for easy unsubscribing. The Can-Spam Act states commercial e-mail must offer recipients an easy opt-out or unsubscribe option. While this act doesn't prevent you from sending unsolicited e-mails to those you have no relationship with, it's not a good practice if you want to maintain a positive brand image.

Target. The most successful e-mail marketers don't "spray and pray." They segment their e-mail list using subscriber personas – groups of subscribers that share common attributes. Personas could be as simple as subscriber type (customers, prospects and influencers). Or they could be more complex such as the subscriber's level of engagement (never

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BANKRUPTCIES	60	60	18,966
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UTILITY CONNECTIONS	103	103	26,767
MARRIAGE LICENSES	28	28	5,477

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engaged, engaged but no purchase, one-time purchaser, frequent purchaser).

If you're reluctant to invest in e-mail marketing for fear that it will soon be bumped off by its trendier technological counterparts, don't be. The low cost and strong potential ROI ensure e-mail marketing has a long future.

[Lori Turner](#) is managing partner of RedRover Sales & Marketing, www.redrovercompany.com. You can follow her on Facebook and Twitter.

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