

# Done Correctly, E-Mail Marketing Can Recap Great Rewards

By Lorraine A. DarConte

Everyone with a computer and an e-mail account has been the recipient and/or victim of e-mail marketing. Yes, there is a fine line between valuable e-mail marketing and annoying spam, and business need to make the distinction. However, when done right, e-mail marketing can greatly benefit any advertising campaign.

"E-mail marketing is one of the most effective tools in your bag for engaging and interacting with customers. It's still the most cost effective and profitable way to reach customers today in a mass communication model," states Steve Latham, CEO of online marketing consulting company, Spur Digital, in Houston. "If you have thousands of customers, it's a great way to send them information that's relevant, educational, and informative, that they find value in. It also lets you track and measure what people are interested in when it comes to e-mail correspondence."

But like any other business activity, notes Latham, someone has to be responsible for it. "E-mails can be a great asset or a liability depending on how you use it. There are certain best practices you need to become familiar with and you have to understand the legal requirements according to the CAN-SPAM Act. Businesses need to learn how to use e-mail to enhance a brand and build that relationship versus becoming an annoyance to their customers," he warned.

## Cheap, Quick, and Timely

The best reason to use e-mail marketing is its return on the investment (ROI). "Compared to direct mail there's no paper cost, no postage and no printing," states Jeanne Jennings, e-mail marketing consultant and author of *The E-mail Marketing Kit: The Ultimate E-mail Marketer's Bible*. "It's also very timely.

For instance, let's say the pollen count has been very high, a company that sells allergy medication can send out an e-mail noting this and remind people to make sure they have their medication on hand. You can't do that with direct mail because you can't time it."

Mike Ferranti, CEO, Endai WorldWide, agrees and states, "Start-up costs are so small that any company, regardless of size can integrate a smartly designed campaign into its marketing program in a short time. Using this marketing strategy won't break the bank. In this day and age, with the ease of measuring your real-time ROI, you can't afford not to. With a few well-established rules of engagement, chances are it will make a reasonable return on investment very quickly. In some cases, the results, like the Internet itself, are immediate. What's more,"

Ferranti states, "e-mail isn't just a way to get your brand in front of people. It's an opportunity to establish engagement and dialog with customers."

However, cheap and fast can have its downside. Patrick Gray, President of Prevoyance Group, a Strategic IT consulting company, and author of *Breakthrough IT: Supercharging Organizational Value Through Technology*, states, "The ubiquitous nature of e-mail - and its extremely low cost per message - has caused many marketers to throw convention out the window and assume that with enough 'blast' customers are bound to respond to the message, regardless of its quality. The low-cost nature of e-mail has become its biggest Achilles' heel," Gray states, "as your message must compete with thousands of others that are also attempting to take advantage of its low cost and broad reach."

"Consumers who are apt to respond to a marketing e-mail are more likely to be technically adept; and marketing toward these people requires an equally sophisticated message. Trite offers and unfounded claims are likely to fail, while highly targeted message that provide value to the customer first - and seek to make the sale second - will rule the day," concludes Gray.

"We know that transactional messages have much better open and click-through rates. Hence, businesses are looking at ways to add tasteful promotional messages to them and taking more care with the copy rather than having the IT person write it. It's an important trend that makes a lot of sense."

– Jeanne Jennings,  
e-mail marketing consultant

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