

7 outboard e-mail best practices

Keep in mind using e-mail for prospecting isn't about generating contributions straight away; it's about building trust and starting relationships.

Here are seven tips that make a difference when it comes to e-mail prospecting.

1. Personalize your subject lines by segment. Calling out a specific segment in a subject line generates an increase in open rates of 42 percent, internet marketing firm, Worldata reports. Make sure it's about the type of product you're selling.

2. Put a date in the subject line. Having a date or specific time period in the subject line generates increases in open rates of 39 percent, Worldata reports. By adding a sense of urgency, such as 'Offer ends Friday' or '2 days left' or 'offer expires on Oct. 22,' your e-mails will more likely get opened.

3. Make sure ISPs leave messages on your server several months after campaigns end. Over 15% percent of all click-throughs occur after the event date of your offer has ended. Consequently, we recommend keeping your landing pages and e-mail message images on the server for weeks after the campaign ends. Not having an "after strategy" is doing yourself a mistake.

4. Understand what your recipients are trying to tell you. Check your format image link regularly. If it inches up from 12% to 16%, that's not a good thing. It means your images aren't rendering very well.

5. Send follow-up e-mails. Follow-up e-mails have become a standard in terms of driving response, whether you're a B-to-B or consumer marketer.

6. Register yourself. To really see what happens after someone clicks to register for your e-mail messages or e-newsletter, go through the process and register yourself. When you do, be sure to clear out your cache and cookies prior to testing so you can see what everyone else will see.

7. Test, test, test. Test as many elements as you can in each campaign. Elements to focus on include:

- subject line and from name;
- specific words in your copy;
- content — either simplify it or add to it; and
- increasing the sizes of clickable areas in the e-mail.

