

Sending Success



101110100101010101101
101110100101010101101
10111010010101010110
101110100101010101101

Propelling your camp into the hearts
and inboxes of your constituents

E-mail marketing has become critical to increasing fund-raising success and membership enrollment for many nonprofit organizations. The opportunity to engage with your customers and friends, communicate news, and solicit funding is vital. Whether your ministry is a time-honored camp supported by generations of families or a new conference center building a calendar of events, it's critical to establish clear, regular communication with constituents.

tional channels such as direct mail or print advertising. Consider these steps as you weave together your e-mail marketing plan.

Build Your Audience

The initial step is to create a solid, permission-based e-mail list. This might sound like an arduous task, but you can succeed if you heed some key tips designed to cultivate your list and keep it growing in both size and value.

First, ask your audience for their e-mail addresses and permission. Whether it's over the phone or in person, don't forget to tell guests, donors, volunteers, and others about your e-mail communications and ask if you can add them to your list.

Use each point of contact as a way to add to your subscriber list. When you meet people, tell them about your free e-newsletter and ask them if they would like to join your list.

Putting a "Join My E-mail List" sign-up box on your website is an important way to gather more subscribers.

Constant Contact and other e-mail marketing service providers make it easy for you to do this.

Your website is the first place most people look when they want information about your organization. Their visiting your website is a positive first step, but are you capturing their e-mail

addresses before they leave? Don't miss this crucial chance to start building relationships with them.

Perfect the Timing

Secondly, you'll want to decide how often you can realistically do a newsletter or other type of message. I recommend communicating at least once monthly, and more often to promote specific programs, fund-raising events, and the like. If you're just starting out or managing campaigns by yourself, communicate quarterly at a minimum.

Permission is perishable, so it's important that you commit and stick to a schedule you can manage, and follow up with subscribers who opt in to your list promptly.

While audiences vary, mid-day delivery is better than mornings or evenings for ensuring your message is opened and read. Choosing the right day of the week is also important. Often Tuesday and Wednesday achieve better results than the beginning or the end of the week. Your audience may be different, so do some testing to determine the delivery timing that is right for your camp.

Master the Opening Line

The subject lines of your e-mails can make all the difference between having a successful campaign or those messages ending up in virtual trash cans. Fifty characters is all the space you have to engage your constituents and supporters



Easy, affordable, immediate, targeted, and highly effective, e-mail is one of the most powerful marketing tools available today. When you add e-mail to your marketing mix, you spend less time, money, and resources than with tradi-

In CCCA's Store

▶ *Writing Effective E-Mail* by Nancy Flynn, Tom Flynn

On the Internet

▶ Constant Contact's Learning Center <http://tinyurl.com/2yxofv>

Related Resources

so they take the all-important next step—opening your e-mail.

The key to writing an attention-grabbing subject line is to pique your recipients' interest enough that they are compelled to open your e-mail immediately. It takes finesse to create interest without being so blatantly promotional that the e-mail sounds like spam. The following suggestions will help you write superior subject lines:

- ➔ **Keep it short and simple.** Your recipients will either open or delete your e-mail in three seconds or less. And, with only 30 to 50 characters, including spaces, to create this seven- to ten-word attention-getting subject line, you must convey your most powerful statement in those first few words.
- ➔ **Give a hint.** A vague subject line is a waste of space. Consider this example of a monthly newsletter with the subject line: "The Camp Pine Newsletter: April 2009." This fails to tell the recipients anything about what they will find when they open the

e-mail and offers very little reason to do so. A better approach for a newsletter like this is: "Camp Pine: 5 Tips for a Better Retreat."

- ➔ **Write it last.** Many e-mail marketing services prompt you to write your subject line first, as you are building your e-mail. Instead, come back to it when you have finished writing and designing your e-mail content.

It's helpful to determine all the elements of your e-mail first and then look for the most compelling topic to highlight in the subject line. Read your message over and pick the concept or news that will entice your recipients to learn more by opening the e-mail.

- ➔ **Test it.** You may be surprised to see what a difference a small variation can make in those seven to ten little words. When you have two strong yet different subject lines for your e-mail, test them.

Split your list in half and use a different subject line for each group. After a number of tests like this, you will have a very good idea of what works for your recipients. And the better you know your audience, the more effectively you can communicate with them.

Analyze and Revise

After you've begun to send e-mails, put effort into analyzing your e-mail tracking reports. Then you can adjust your campaigns based on what you learn about your constituents and what works best for you.

Tracking and reporting data will open up a treasure trove of information about your audience's responses to your communications. Take a look back: Who's opening? Who's clicking through? Which subject lines worked best? Which calls to action were most effective? Can you re-promote to subscribers based on what you learned?

Jupiter Images



Avoiding the Spam Trap

Spam filters can hurt your overall e-mail deliverability, or your ability to get your messages to the inboxes of your members. You can do several things to build a great reputation with Internet service providers (ISPs), and give your e-mails the best chance of making it to your camp's customers and supporters—and getting opened.

- ▶ **Use a recognizable "from" name.** Most people open or delete e-mails based on the "from" name. Use a name that those on your list will recognize, such as your organization's name.
- ▶ **Write a clear subject line.** A subject line that clearly represents who you are and the content of your message will help your audience recognize your e-mail as legitimate.
- ▶ **Make it relevant.** While content is just one of many factors ISPs look at, it is the main concern for people on your list. If you are sending them irrelevant communications, even if they signed up for your list, they may delete the next e-mail they receive from you without even opening it. Take the time to know your audience and only send information that is helpful and useful to them.
- ▶ **Keep a clean list.** Get rid of the nonexistent addresses you are sending e-mails to every month. The ISPs notice when you don't.
- ▶ **Offer confirmed opt-in.** Also known as double opt-in, this is a surefire way to ensure that the people on your list really want to be there. When a person signs up through your website or other avenues, he or she will automatically receive an e-mail from you asking the individual to confirm his or her subscription.

—Ron Cates

Engaging e-mail newsletters can build familiarity and trust in your communications and the entire organization.

Most of your work should be not be in creating the communications, but analyzing the results and nurturing better responses. Build regular—at least quarterly—analysis into your e-mail marketing plan.

Protect Trust

Finally, be aware that not every e-mail recipient wants the same thing from your camp or conference. Be sure to ask and listen. People want to be heard—and to know that what they say matters to you. Establish an authentic exchange by using tools such as online surveys to stay in touch with customer, supporter, staff, and volunteer needs.

People also value trust in their relationships. Earn trust and keep it by continually working to maintain the

integrity of your relationships. Engaging e-mail newsletters can build familiarity and trust in your communications and the entire organization.

As you develop your e-mail marketing and implementing these simple steps above, you can rest assured that your important e-mails are being read by your desired audience. As they are, you can boost camper and guest numbers, feed fund-raising efforts, and build your brand for a more effective camp ministry. ■



An award-winning business leader, Ron has developed a broad range of solutions to help nonprofits. He is a regional development director for Constant Contact. E-mail him at rcates@constantcontact.com.