



# GET SOCIAL!

IDEAS FOR INTEGRATING SOCIAL MEDIA INTO YOUR EMAIL STRATEGY IN 2011

The debate over whether social media could usurp email as a marketing channel is so 2010. As we venture forth into 2011, it's apparent that social marketing and email are complementary, not competing, media. "Facebook and Twitter tend to be broadcast channels still," says Ryan Deutsch, vice president of emerging media at ThreadMarketing, a StrongMail company. "If I can convince someone to subscribe to my email channel, I can begin to have a much more one-to-one conversation with him."

But while marketers are recognizing the importance of integrating email and social media, many still aren't sure how to do so. These tips should help:

✓ **PROMOTE YOUR SOCIAL CHANNELS IN YOUR EMAILS, AND PROMOTE EMAIL OPT-IN VIA YOUR SOCIAL CHANNELS.** A surprising number of brands with Facebook pages still fail to include a prominent link to an email subscription form.

✓ **MAKE IT EASY FOR EMAIL SUBSCRIBERS TO SHARE CONTENT VIA SOCIAL NETWORKS.** Include share-with-your-network (SWYN) links in your emails. By clicking the link, a recipient can automatically populate his Facebook status, a Twitter post, or whichever other social network you've programmed with a URL linking to the content of the email and even, if you wish, a brief blurb.

✓ **OFFER EMAIL SUBSCRIBERS COUPONS AND DISCOUNTS IN EXCHANGE FOR FOLLOWING YOU ON FACEBOOK OR OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA.** As Shannon Aronson, senior director, strategic and analytical

consulting group at Epsilon notes, most people click the "like" button of a brand's Facebook page primarily to receive special offers. Acknowledge this from the get-go and use it to grow your fan base and encourage engagement.



✓ **IDENTIFY EMAIL SUBSCRIBERS WHO ARE ACTIVE IN SOCIAL MEDIA, AND MARKET TO THEM DIFFERENTLY.**

**"People who take the initiative to follow and show an interest in your company deserve to be rewarded,"** says John Foley Jr., CEO of InterlinkONE.

"If you can categorize them as social media followers in your CRM system and database, then it should be easy to deliver personal messages to them when you send out email communications. Your social media followers have the potential to truly serve as advocates for your brand." Deutsch suggests offering top influencers incentives such as discounts for sending qualified leads or new customers your way.

✓ **POST LINKS TO YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA OUTLETS ON YOUR EMAIL UNSUBSCRIBE PAGES.** It may be the medium and not your brand that email unsubscribers are unhappy with. Acknowledge that with copy along the lines of, "We understand that you no longer wish to receive emails from us. But perhaps you'd like to continue to stay in touch through Facebook instead."

—SHERRY CHIGER



## VIRAL POWER:

## Small Words, Big Payoff

**WHY "FRIENDS AND FAMILY" SHOULD BE PART OF YOUR EMAIL VOCABULARY**

**Want to increase customer engagement and boost your email ROI? Consider a "friends and family" viral campaign.**

The friends-and-family email campaigns of yesteryear contained very targeted promotions sent to preselected groups of employees, business partners and perhaps best customers. These offers were highly coveted and were perceived as being "better" than those available to the general public. The campaigns not only were strong revenue performers but also became effective acquisition tools due to the virility of the included offers.

Today, these campaigns are typically distributed to the entire customer file. Built upon consumer discernment and marketing legacy, the "new class" of campaigns capitalizes on a perception of exclusivity that, for the most part, strays from reality.

But luckily for marketers, it appears that the perception of friends-and-family offers being "special" continues—going so far as to outperform on all key metrics otherwise identical promotions without the friends-and-family messaging.

In a recent study, Experian CheetahMail's Strategic Services team found that the most common offers during the holiday season for friends-and-family emails were 20% and 30% off. During this same time period, many businesses also sent non-friends-and-family promotions with the exact same offer values. When we compared the metrics for these campaigns, the results were clear: Friends-and-family emails had 30% higher open rates and 27% higher click rates, and they generated double the transaction rates and triple the revenue per email than bulk mailings with the same offer.—ERIN GEOGHEGAN, marketing manager, Experian Marketing Services



## Reclaim Your Carts

### HOW TO: IMPLEMENT—OR IMPROVE—YOUR OWN ABANDONED-CART TRIGGER CAMPAIGN

**Abandoned-cart email programs**—in which you send triggered emails to visitors who left your site without purchasing the items they'd placed in their shopping carts—have proved to generate impressive ROI. DVD merchant Movies Unlimited, for instance, earned back its investment within 30 days of implementing its abandoned-cart program, and educational supplies cataloger S&S Worldwide manages to convert one out of every four abandoned carts into a sale thanks to its emails.

Here's some advice on implementing—or improving—your own abandoned-cart trigger campaign:

► **Personalize the messages as much as possible.** According to “The Remarketing Report” from Experian Cheethamail, emails that referred to the specific items left in the cart by name or with an image had twice the conversion rate as those that merely offered a link back to the abandoned cart.

► **“Add some value” to the follow-up emails.** That's the advice of Ross Kramer, CEO of email services provider Listrak, whose clients include Movies Unlimited. Include ratings and reviews of the aban-

donated items, if possible, as well as alternative ways to contact you, such as your toll-free phone number.

► **Be sure that your contact center team is aware if you're going to offer an incentive in the trigger emails, such as 10% off.** Some people may have abandoned their cart because they encountered problems with the site and subsequently want to complete their purchase via phone.

► **Test your timing.** At first, Movies Unlimited sent its initial email 24 hours after the cart was abandoned. It then tested sending that first message one hour after the cart was abandoned vs. six hours after. Although the one-hour email had a higher response than the 24-hour message, the six-hour email had the highest conversion rate according to early analysis of the results.

► **Be certain that your automated program allows you to immediately remove a customer from the message sequencing once he completes his purchase.**

You don't want someone who placed an order several days after receiving the initial email to receive the second email in the series.—SC

## Avoid the Spammer Slammer (5 Tips for Complying with Can-Spam)

Given how complex marketing has become, it's easy to make the sort of careless mistake that can lead to big problems. With that in mind, here are five easy tips to ensure that you are compliant with the Can-Spam Act.

1) **Handle those unsubscribes immediately.** By law, an unsubscribe request must be handled within 10 days. That is far too long. Some companies hide under this rule to get in one last email. Do not be that company. Someone who is unsubscribing may still want to be a customer, but she could quickly change her mind about that if you do not honor her unsubscribe request immediately.

2) **Go opt-in, not opt-out.** In other words, don't use prechecked boxes

to get subscribers on your list. That barely counts as permission. The best subscribers are the ones who ask to hear from you. A double opt-in process is even better.

3) **Give people only what they ask for.** Don't add people to the lists of your other, unrequested newsletters just because they signed up for one. Instead, provide information and sign-ups so that those interested can easily join your other lists.

4) **Keep good documentation.** If someone verbally tells you he wants to sign up for your email list or gives you a business card, that's not enough to prove you have permission should you get a spam complaint. Instead, get good documentation: written, time-

stamped, digital sign-ups. If you have customers coming into your place of business, you can provide a guest book for them to sign up right there.

5) **Beware of outsourcing nightmares.** If you outsource your newsletter, check in with this third-party provider, frequently if possible, to see that it is following all the rules. If bad email marketing is being conducted in your name, you and your company will have to deal with the consequences.—ANDY SHORE, marketing and social media expert, Benchmark Email



### HELPFUL HINTS:

## Top-Notch

DON'T WASTE SPACE — CRAFT YOUR PREHEADERS WITH CARE

You no doubt know the importance of slaving over your subject lines and headlines until you perfect your prose. But you may not be so conscientious when it comes to your preheader — and that could be hurting your response.

The preheader is the line or two of small text that runs along the top of an email message, above the headline (hence the name). If marketers use that space at all, it's usually to notify recipients that they can view the email as a web page.

Given how many ISPs and network administrators block email images, that's not necessarily a bad use of the preheader. Andrew Robinson, vice president, full service at online marketing firm Lyris, says that up to 10% of an email's click-throughs can be via the preheader link to the online version of the message. But “one of my bugbears is the negativity of the language,” he says. He advises testing a more positively worded version—instead of “If you're having trouble viewing this email, click here,” for instance, try “See our latest products online.”

For that reason, Jim Kelley, manager, creative services for email services provider e-Dialog, suggests thinking of the preheader as a “super subject line,” one that's an extension of your subject line. A subject line such as “Ho, ho, holiday savings” could be complemented by a preheader such as “Save up to 30% on Christmas decor and more.”—SC

“If you have an email that is mostly images, having this super subject line of text on top will help.”—JIM KELLEY