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Myths, Reality...& E-Newsletters

By Robert Kravitz — posted 06/06/2011

It seems as though everyone is inundated with electronic (e) newsletters and e-marketing materials *every day*. Sometimes these are formally presented, similar to a Web page delivered to your inbox; other times they may be in the form of conventional e-mail. Both formats encourage you to read something, link to something, buy something, or just know something.

Ten or 15 years ago, many people were up in arms about unsolicited e-mails and e-newsletters such as these. They called it spam, and groups formed to do whatever they could to discourage it. Today, we have even more "spam," and we still have people and tools trying to stop or block it. But e-marketing continues for one important reason: It works. E-mail marketing, in whatever the form, has proved to be a successful tool, and the following discussion of the myths and reality behind it may contribute to the success of your e-newsletter.

Electronic Marketing: Myth Versus Reality

Robert Kravitz, the author of this article, knows everything there is to know about e-mail marketing and e-newsletters for now and evermore. This is a myth—a big myth. No one knows everything about e-mail marketing. No discussion of e-mail marketing necessarily applies to all industry segments. What works for one group of people may not work for another group or industry. And what is true today may not be true a year from now.

As a communications, public relations, and marketing professional representing clients in the professional cleaning and building industries, I consider it part of my job to learn as much as I can about all forms of communications and marketing formats, including e-newsletters. So what I am sharing with you here is what seems to apply to most businesses and what I believe will work for those of us in the jansan and building industries—as well. Now, let's examine some more myths and truths.

E-mail is dead. Myth. Some people think that because social media and phone texting have grown exponentially in recent years, traditional e-mail is a dying technology. This isn't the case. While e-mail may be less important to teenagers and young people than it is to other population segments, for many people, especially business people, e-mail is alive and well. Studies indicate that 70 percent of us read most or all of our e-mail every day. It has become part of our daily ritual. This is important when considering using e-mail for marketing because it means this technology is viable now and will likely continue to be a powerful way of reaching customers in the near future.

B2B e-newsletter marketing is different from B2C marketing. Myth. Although this can be true for certain industries and marketing segments, the line between business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) e-newsletter marketing has blurred considerably. One reason for this blurring is that although many of us may have multiple e-mail accounts—business and personal, for instance—we typically have



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everything delivered to the same e-mail inbox. And because most of us do read some or all of our e-mails, whether the message is for you as a business or you as a consumer, either way, you will likely notice and read it.

The best time to send out an e-newsletter is during the week. Myth—and a surprising one at that. Studies now find the best days to reach customers or target markets are the weekend. Why? People have more time to read e-newsletters without the pressures and time constraints of the business day. Experiment with this. Send your e-newsletters out at least three times over the weekend and see if the number of times they are opened increases.

Evening is the best time to send out an e-newsletter. Myth. Most studies indicate that sending out an e-newsletter or e-marketing message around 6 a.m. is most effective. Sending it out in the evening may actually have the least impact. And there is one more thing you should know about evening delivery. It appears that unsubscribe rates go up when e-newsletters are sent out late at night, making this delivery time not only less effective but dangerous to your subscription list as well.

“Send to a Friend” links are a great way to get more subscribers to a e-newsletter. Myth. These links, found on many e-newsletters, have proved to be pretty ineffective. However, what may prove promising is adding links that say, “Follow us on Facebook” or refer to some other social media outlet. If your company has a Facebook or Twitter site, make sure your e-newsletter offers this option.

The most-read e-newsletters are the ones from someone the reader knows. True. And this can be important information for jansan distributors and building service contractor (BSC). People tend to read e-newsletters if they know or have some connection with the sender; the stronger the connection, the greater the likelihood. To take advantage of this, prepare one company e-newsletter but have each sales rep send it out under his/her name to individual customers. This can be more effective than one e-e-newsletter sent to all customers from the larger, faceless company.

Even if people read a e-newsletter, they most often just delete it right away. True. But there are ways to get people to hold onto your e-newsletters and in so doing help your business market its products or services. The best way to do this is to include how-tos, surveys, statistics, special dates to remember—anything that will make people think they may wish to refer back to the information and be able to use it at a later date.

Too many hyperlinks in a e-newsletter are a no-no. Myth. In online journalism, it is believed that only a few—no more than three or four—appropriate links in an article are acceptable. This is not necessarily true with a e-newsletter. In fact, the more links, the higher the click-through rates, which can take your readers to important pages in your company Web site.

It is no longer necessary to see how an e-newsletter looks on different computers. Myth. With the advent of devices other than traditional computers, an entirely new dynamic is evolving. If the e-newsletter is designed to look like a Web page, see how it appears on different computers using different operating systems. But what is becoming even more important is to see how it looks on smartphones, iPads, and similar technologies. More and more people are reading their e-mails on these devices. A e-newsletter that is attractive on a laptop computer may be essentially unreadable on a iPad or mobile device.

Feeling Special

Space will simply not allow for discussion of all e-marketing issues, so I would like to leave you with the following: Make your e-newsletter subscribers feel special. When

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subscribers think your e-newsletter is for “members only,” it becomes more valuable to them.

To make readers feel exclusive, have them sign up for the e-newsletter—don’t just give it away—and be sure to tell them the e-newsletter is, for instance, “just for jansan professionals.” Include a privacy statement about e-mail addresses so they feel a degree of safety. In addition, mention that subscribers may receive special discounts, special promotions, and advance notices on products or services. This tells them they are special and also keeps them loyal subscribers.

Although information for this article comes from a variety of sources, two deserve particular credit. HubSpot is a software marketing company that helps businesses generate traffic to their Web sites. MailChimp designs and distributes e-newsletters. Both organizations conduct studies and have focus groups analyzing and evaluating different e-newsletter and online marketing tools.



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